



Tracing Nurses

**A guide to British nursing sources for
researching family and local history**

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Introduction

Welcome to this guide which may help you find your nurse. Health care is a complex landscape where records may or may not survive, in which your nurse may or may not be named. If you are lucky, you will trace your nurse and discover significant information about them and what their life was like.

This guide seeks to help you in your quest. It sets out the records that you should look for, and some of the reasons why you may not be able to find your nurse. One of the challenges is the sheer size of the profession. Nursing is the largest profession in the United Kingdom – in 2021 there were over 700,000 registered nurses, not including nursing associates and health care support workers. With so many nurses it's not surprising that surviving lists of nurses contain a lot of repetition or people with similar or identical names. Nursing is a profession predominantly made up of women. Although there have always been men in nursing the proportion has remained static at around 90% women to 10% men in nursing for the past 100 years. Women can be challenging to trace, tending to be less documented than men and with marriage changes to names that can prevent an individual being traced.

Nursing is a relatively new profession – state registration of nurses was approved in 1919 with the first register of nurses published in 1922. Nurses can be traced in the censuses and other documents before this time. The definition of what makes a nurse means that many nursing staff will not be listed in the records we describe below. Bearing that in mind, exploring the world of nursing, the different care settings, levels of expertise, the diversity of the nurses themselves, and the life stories that come through, make this research immensely rewarding when you are successful.

We would love to hear about the stories you find, so please share them with us, email honf@rcn.org.uk

Stuart Wildman
Chair of the RCN History of Nursing Forum

[Not sure where to start?](#)

[Try searching the nursing registers on Ancestry, following the guide on p.26](#)

What to look for: Records at home

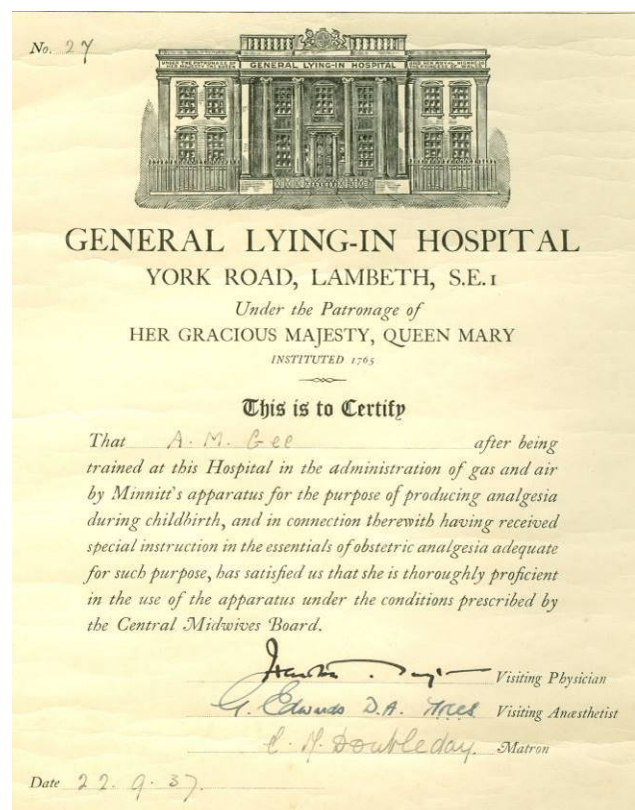
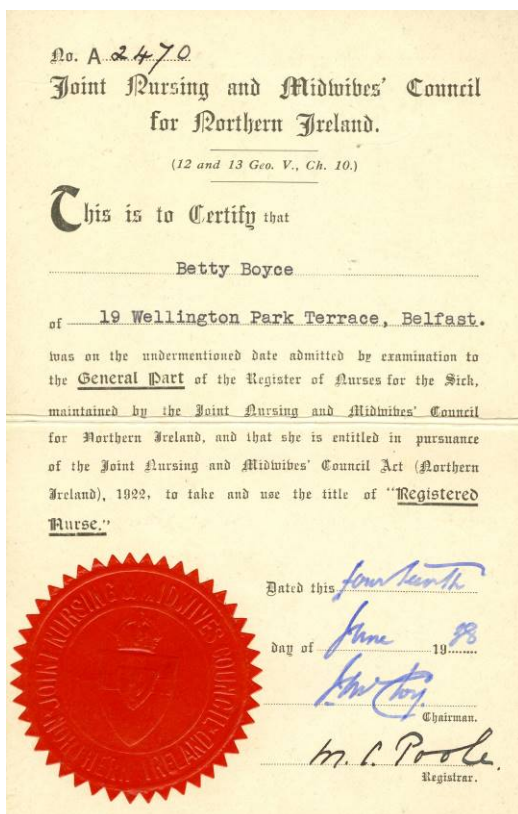
Before you start looking for official records relating to your ancestor, have a look at home and ask other members of your family for items or memories that may help. As well as diaries and letters, you should look for the following nursing-specific items.

Nursing certificates

Nurse training, like most other forms of education, awarded certificates when successfully completed. These outline where and when someone trained and what level they achieved.

Nursing is a profession that requires training to become a “registered nurse” and lifelong learning with certificates being awarded when further career development is pursued. There have been many changes as nursing and nurse education have advanced and developed over time. Certificates are kept by individuals, because they represent proud achievements, but also because they are the proof required to practice.

Certificates are sometimes framed and hung on the wall, but often are held in files and carefully stored. You will find them stored in cardboard rolls – sometimes rolled up with posters to keep them clean.



Images © RCN Archives

Left: Betty Boyce Registered Nurse certificate, Northern Ireland 1938 (Ref C883)

Right: Anne Gee, General Lying in Hospital Lambeth Certificate, Sep 1937 (Ref C678)

Badges

Nurses often own some small badges or medals. These give vital clues about where somebody trained, worked, lived, or nursing organisations that they were affiliated with. Badges are also useful for local history research.

'Hospital badges' are very common, awarded at the completion of training. From the 1870s-1990s most nurses were trained in hospitals, initially undergoing a one-year training which was increased to three years by the end of the nineteenth century.

Usually made of silver and coloured enamel, these were worn whilst on duty to indicate who was a qualified nurse. Each hospital had its own unique design; often heraldic in nature, they include symbols and images specific to the hospital. The designs tend to stay the same over time. Nurses wore these throughout their careers, including when they moved hospitals.

On the reverse of the badges, you will sometimes find inscribed the individual nurses' name, their number, and/or dates of training.

As well as training on the wards in different hospital departments student nurses attended regular lectures in addition to their practical work. As students and probationers, they had to undertake a series of rigorous examinations, both written and practical, before they could progress to the next stage of training.

On successful completion of training, student nurses were awarded their certificate and their hospital badge.

The Royal College of Nursing Archives has a large collection of [hospital nursing badges](#) from across the UK. The badge will usually contain the name of the hospital.

More details of how to locate hospital records are given further below in this guide.

With the move to university-based nurse training in the 1990s hospital badges ceased, though some universities have since introduced badges for their alumni.



Images © RCN Archives, left to right

St. Lawrence's Hospital, Caterham, Surrey c.1958 (Ref B_20)

Glasgow Royal Maternity Hospital c.1960 (Ref B_776)

Prince of Wales's General Hospital belt buckle, c.1924 (Ref B_1148)

General Nursing Council badges

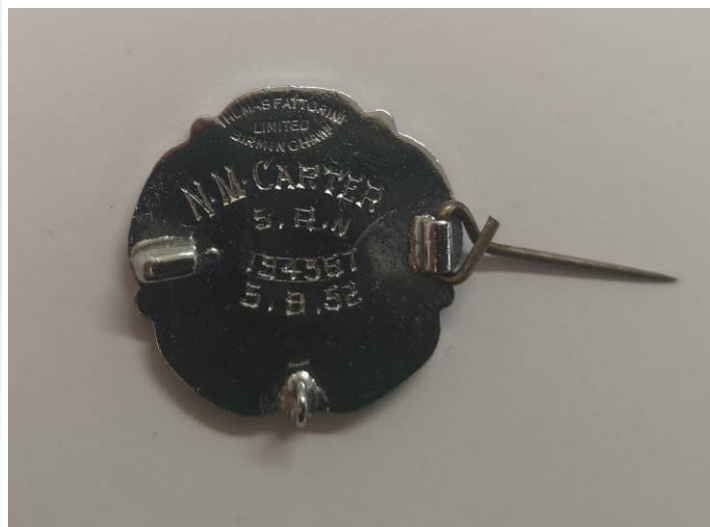
After qualification came registration with the General Nursing Council (GNC). This single design was awarded to all state registered nurses in England and Wales. Northern Ireland and Scotland had different badges. If your ancestor was awarded one of these, you should be able to locate them in the General Nursing Council Registers.

Blue enamel and silver (real silver to 1940 and chrome thereafter), the reverse often had the name and GNC number of the nurse it was awarded to – though not always. Some badges came with a short pin and chain to keep it securely fixed to the nurse's uniform – reflecting the professional value of these badges in the workplace.

The badge is in the shape of a rose, symbolising England, with daffodils symbolising Wales on either side of the figure. The figure is Hygeia, the Greek goddess of good health, cleanliness and hygiene. The inscription is 'The General Nursing Council for England and Wales'.

The GNC required badges to be returned to them when a nurse ceased practicing, or at the very least upon their death; such was the importance of protecting the status of professional nurses. However, many badges were kept by nurses and their families, especially with the end of the GNC and the ceasing of badges in 1983.

More details of how to search the general nursing registers are given further below in this guide.



Images © RCN Archives, left to right

GNC Badge (Ref B_30 - C26A_B)

GNC Badge, reverse with inscription (Ref B_1485)

Badges of affiliation

Badges were, and are, produced to show affiliation to different nursing bodies. These might include the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Midwives, other unions or nursing bodies such as The Cavell Trust. If your nurse held one of these, you may be able to find further information about them in that organisation's archives. You can find surviving archive records by searching [The National Archives](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) whose online catalogue includes details of records held by other archive offices.

District nurses were usually affiliated to the [Queens Nursing Institute](#) (QNI) founded in 1887.

Like hospital badges some of the early membership badges have a name or membership number inscribed on the reverse; they were often ornate. In recent years badges for daily wear have been introduced, these are much simpler smooth designs which can be easily cleaned to meet infection prevention control guidance.



Images © RCN Archives, left to right

Royal College of Midwives (RCM) (Ref B_39)

District Nursing Institute (Ref B_254)

RCN badge (Ref B_49)

RCN Blue & red hands logo (Ref B_1223)

Buckles

Some hospitals issued simple buckles for the belt that formed part of most nursing uniforms. You may find an ornate silver belt buckle in your ancestor's belongings. Upon successful completion of hospital training, a silver buckle was traditionally given as a present by the nurse's family. The buckle was a personal gift and design often reflected links to family values, beliefs or experiences, as well as to the fashion of the time. It tended not be worn on regular workdays but was kept for 'dress uniform' and special occasions. You may find family photographs or letters related to the buckle, but not official records.



Image © RCN Archives. Belt buckle on dark red belt c.1985 (ref B_1168)

Photographs

Look for photographs, these may help date or place your nurse. Look for inscriptions on the reverse listing names, places and dates.

The photographer will sometimes include their details which can help date and place a photograph. The Royal Photographic Society has an online guide to [Researching Historic Photographs](#).



Image © RCN Archives. Papers of Margaret Horn. Night shift nurses at Ancoats Hospital. March 1915 (ref C_488_P)

What to look for: Nursing records

Ancestry

Many of the registers described below are available to search via [Ancestry](#). This was the result of a digitisation project between the Royal College of Nursing and Ancestry which went online in 2016.

Registers included in Ancestry are indicated in the text.

Details of how to search the nursing registers in Ancestry can be found in Appendix One of this guide.

RCN membership records

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) was established in 1916 as a professional association for nurses, and later became a trade union.

There is a published RCN membership register covering the period 1916-1923 (available on Ancestry). This gives each member's name, joining date, address and qualification.

Beyond the register, the RCN Archives cannot disclose confidential membership information under the Data Protection Act 2018.

State registration of nurses

Since 2001, the statutory regulatory body of nursing in the UK has been the [Nursing & Midwifery Council](#) (NMC). The NMC was preceded by the UK Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (UKCC), which worked in conjunction with four national boards and dealt with educational standards (1983-2001).

Before the UKCC, there were three General Nursing Councils (GNCs): one for England & Wales, one for Scotland and one for Ireland. The GNCs were established in 1921, each with clearly prescribed duties and responsibilities for the training, examination and registration of nurses and the approval of training schools for the purpose of maintaining a Register of Nurses.

The State Register of Nurses

The three GNCs each published an annual Register of Nurses from 1922 until the late 1960s – available on Ancestry. For the period 1922-1947, these volumes list nurses by name (including maiden name where appropriate), registration date and number, place of registration (always the GNC headquarters in London, Dublin or Edinburgh), permanent address at that time, and where they qualified with dates. Please note that England and Wales ran a joint register from London.

From the 1950s, the GNC Registers only list newly qualified nurses for each year and do not give their address. They are arranged as quarterly lists, repeating four times in each volume. They include lists of 'deletions' from the Register, through retirement etc.

Originally the Register had a main, 'General' part and supplementary 'mental', 'male', 'fever' 'mental defectives' and 'sick children's' parts. These supplementary parts have changed over

the years. When searching, check all parts of the Register as well as the late entries list, which sometimes appears at the end of the 'General' part.

THE REGISTER OF NURSES FOR 1922 (England and Wales)	3
GENERAL PART OF THE REGISTER	3
SUPPLEMENTARY PART OF THE REGISTER—	
1. Male Nurses	349
2. Mental Nurses	350
3. Nurses for Mental Defectives	360
4. Sick Children's Nurses	361
5. Fever Nurses	370

Nurses would pay an annual fee to be on the Register. Registration was initially voluntary and many who chose to register were hospital nurses. After the 1943 Nurses' Act it became compulsory to be a State Registered Nurse (SRN) and this is still a legal requirement to practice nursing in the UK. In Scotland, the term originally used was Registered General Nurse (RGN).

Publication of the Register ceased in 1968 when it moved to a digital format. The NMC still maintains the Register which is available to [search online](#). However the register is no longer an open publication – it is a tool for those with a legitimate interest, such as prospective employers, to check an individual is currently a registered nurse. The NMC cannot give out any personal information under the Data Protection Act 2018.

The Roll of Nurses

Another type of nurse appeared following the Nurses' Act of 1943: the Assistant Nurse, later known as the State Enrolled Nurse (SEN) or briefly as the State Enrolled Assistant Nurse (SEAN). This is not the same level of qualification as a SRN or RGN, but Assistant or Enrolled nurses were recorded in the same way in a Roll of Assistant Nurses, also known as the Roll of Nurses. The GNC kept the Roll, set the syllabus for the examinations and approved the schools of nursing within hospitals.

Nursing registers in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland

The GNC for Ireland maintained the Register of Nurses from 1921-1950. In 1922, this body was replaced in Northern Ireland by the Joint Nursing and Midwifery Council (JNMC), which took over publication of the Register and later the Roll of Nurses. The current Republic of Ireland registration body, *An Bord Altranais* (Irish Nursing Board), was established by the Nurses' Act of 1950 in place of the GNC for Ireland and the Central Midwives Board for Ireland.

Physical locations of registers and rolls

Note: The following registers are **duplicate print copies** of what is held on Ancestry:

Registers held at RCN Archive:

- GNC England & Wales Register of Nurses, 1922-1968.
- GNC England & Wales Roll of Nurses, 1947-1968 (parts of 1947-1948 missing).

- CMB England & Wales Midwives Roll, 1979-1982.
- GNC Scotland Register of Nurses, 1945-1948, 1948 supplement, 1950, 1955 and 1957-1967.
- GNC Scotland Roll of [Assistant] Nurses, 1946 and 1956-1966.
- CMB Scotland Midwives Roll, 1917-1968; plus a manuscript Roll for 1981-1984.
- GNC Ireland Register of Nurses, 1939, 1943 and 1945-1948. No copies of the Roll held.
- JNMC Northern Ireland Register of Nurses, 1943, 1946, 1956 and 1959.
- JNMC Northern Ireland Register of Nurses and Roll of Nurses combined, 1949 and 1951.
- JNMC Northern Ireland Midwives Roll, 1959.

The National Archives (TNA): a full run of the GNC England & Wales Register and Roll (Register of Nurses and supplementary registers, 1921-1973: reference DT10). TNA has a guide to [records on doctors and nurses](#), though as at January 2022 the guide had not been updated to reflect GNC registers now available on Ancestry.

National Records of Scotland: a full run of the GNC Scotland Register and Roll is held at the, Edinburgh (Register of Nurses, 1921-1983; Roll of Nurses, 1944-1983; Register of Health Visitors, 1933-1983: reference GNC 12, 13 and 14). At present, access to the original volumes of the Register and Roll is closed for 75 years from the date of creation.

Cambridge University Library: GNC England & Wales Register of Nurses, 1922-1968, & Roll of Assistant Nurses, 1947-1968.

Oxford Libraries Online (SOLO): GNC England & Wales Register of Nurses, 1922-1968; GNC England & Wales Roll of Assistant Nurses, 1948-1961; GNC England & Wales Roll of Nurses, 1961-1968; GNC Scotland Roll of Assistant Nurses, 1950-1966.

Manchester Central Library's Technical Library: GNC England & Wales Register of Nurses, 1946-1968 (reference 610.73 GI).

Wellcome Library, London: GNC England & Wales Register of Nurses, 1930-1944 & 1946-1947; supplementary registers, 1948-1950.

Trinity College Dublin: GNC England & Wales Register of Nurses, 1967-1969; GNC Scotland Register of Nurses, 1961-1967; GNC England & Wales Roll of Nurses, 1967-1969; GNC Scotland Roll of Nurses, 1961-1964 & GNC Scotland Roll of Assistant Nurses, 1960.

The British Library, London: GNC England & Wales Register of Nurses, 1922-1968 and Roll of Assistant Nurses, 1947-1948; GNC Scotland Register of Nurses, 1957 and Roll of Assistant Nurses, 1959-1964.

National Library of Ireland, Dublin: GNC England & Wales Register of Nurses, 1930 onwards. No copies of the Roll are held here.

University College Dublin: GNC Ireland Register of Nurses, 1921-1985. No copies of the Roll are held here.

Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI): Joint Nursing and Midwives' Council for Northern Ireland/Northern Ireland Council for Nurses and Midwives, Register of Nurses, 1922-1983.

Scottish nursing registers

The National Records of Scotland holds the following early nursing registers, which predate the GNC Register:

- Local Government Board (Scotland). Register of trained sick nurses appointed to poorhouse institutions, 1905-1927 (reference HH2/33).
- Scottish Board of Health. Register of trained sick nurses appointed to poorhouse institutions, 1906-1930 (reference HH2/34).
- Scottish Board of Health. Index to register of trained nurses, 1885-1930 (reference HH2/35).
- Scottish Board of Health. Special register of certified nurses, 1907-1923 (reference HH2/36).
- Scottish Board of Health. Register of nursing examination candidates: appointments and subjects passed, 1904-1913 (reference HH2/37).

Nursing and hospital directories

Burdett's Directories - Sir Henry Burdett, a Victorian philanthropist, published *Burdett's Official Nursing Directory* from 1894-1899. The *Directory* was an annual volume containing the law pertaining to nurses, the particulars of nursing institutions and training schools in the UK and abroad, and a list of nurses giving their names, addresses and a very brief résumé. Inclusion was optional and nurses could pay to appear on the list, which many London-based nurses did.

The RCN Archive has copies of the *Directory* for 1898 and 1899 (these are available on Ancestry).

Sir Henry also published *Burdett's Hospital Annual* (1890-1893), which became *Burdett's Hospital & Charities Annual* (1894-1930). This publication lists the hospitals, institutions, charities and organisations then existing in the UK. It contains details of the membership of hospital boards, the names of senior nursing and medical staff, the training available, the size of each hospital and its nursing staff, etc.

The RCN Archive holds editions for 1922-1923 and 1928 (available on Ancestry). Physical copies of additional directories can be located via [Library Hub](#).

Hospital yearbooks and directories - Burdett's Hospital & Charities Annual amalgamated with the Annual Report of the Voluntary Hospitals in Great Britain (excluding London) to become the Hospitals Yearbook (1931-1967). This publication lists each Area Health Authority in the UK and the various hospitals, clinics and units falling under their administration. After 1967, it was known as the Hospitals Yearbook and Directory of Hospital Suppliers.

Additional directories, including those only available in physical format, can be located via [Library Hub](#).

The RCN Archive holds editions for 1977, 1979 and 1985, as well as a copy of its successor publication, *The Hospital & Health Services Yearbook*, for 1990.

London County Council handbooks

The London County Council (LCC), now the Corporation of London, included the Metropolitan Asylums Board (MAB) and employed many nurses across the city. Its annual handbook, *LCC Staff and General Services*, contains the names of nurse employees from 1909-1939, and may

be consulted at the London Metropolitan Archives. See [their](#) History of Nursing Guide for more details.

The RCN Archive holds:

- *Who's Who in the Nursing World. The Nursing Yearbook 1929. Professional Publications Ltd, London.*
- *Guy's Hospital Nurses' League Register & Nursing Guide.* Ash & Co, London (1937, 1950, 1960, 1997 & 2000).
- *Royal British Nurses Association Roll of Members 1909.*

These and later hospital directories are available from health libraries around the UK.

Hospital records

In general, student nurses undertook training in hospitals until the 1990s when training was passed to universities. If you know where your ancestor trained or worked, you should see what records survive for that institution.

Hospital records may include student, probationer and training records, as well as staff registers. The staff registers may include nursing staff – such as nursing assistants, state enrolled nurses and health care assistants – who do not appear in the GNC state register of nurses. As well as staff registers there are often board minutes, staff magazines, photographs, annual reports, which sometimes mention nursing staff by name. In larger hospitals nursing committees were created to oversee recruitment, training, discipline, terms of condition and complaints.

'Character Books' are very useful resources where they survive. Originating in the Victorian period, these remained in use by some hospitals into the late 1960s. The volumes contain manuscript entries, one for each nurse, often with specific information set out in a form across a whole page. These entries contain the matron's views of each nurse's character, their hygiene, self-sacrifice, and respectability. Sometimes insightful, the testimonials reflect the culture of the time as well as individual prejudices; for example black nurses in the Windrush era were often unfairly judged (see Dr Catherine Babikian's talk [West Park Hospital character books, 1924 to 1969: overseas nurses in the NHS](#)).

Many hospital records relating to nursing have not survived to the present day, but those that do can include records that are useful for family historians.

In England and Wales, possible locations include the County Record Office in the area where the hospital was located. The National Archives has an online directory where you can [find a records office](#) by name or geographic location.

The [Hospital Records Database Online](#) held by The National Archives, provides information on UK hospitals and the location of their records. Although it has not been updated since 2012 it remains the key resource for locating hospital records. It is particularly useful for changes of hospital name. If the records are not held at the local record office, they may still be with the hospital.

[Historic Hospitals](#), an online architectural gazetteer has useful lists of hospitals with dates, information on where they were located, and what they looked like. It aims to cover all the UK. This may give a useful overview if you are unsure which hospital your ancestor worked at.

Norfolk County Record Office has an online [guide to nursing and midwifery records](#). In 2021 an index to the [Norfolk and Norwich Nurses' Register, 1900-1928](#) was made available online. The

index is an integral part of their online catalogue. To locate a nurse, simply search for the reference number and a name, for example, NNH 114 Florence. Norfolk have filmed an event where the archivist gave an overview of local [Norfolk records relating to nursing](#).

In London the records may be at [London Metropolitan Archives](#) (LMA). The LMA has produced a [Research Guide to Nursing History](#). The LMA holds the archives of St Thomas's Hospital, home to the Nightingale School of Nursing. The first 148 Nightingale nurses, trained 1860-1870, were listed by Monica Baly in a book chapter 'The Nightingale Nurses: The Myth and the Reality', published as part of *Nursing History: The State of the Art* by Christopher Maggs (Routledge, 1987).

Some hospitals have published books on their history, including some specifically on nursing such as *Nursing through the Years: Care and Compassion at The Royal London Hospital* by Loretta Bellman, Sue Boase, Sarah Rogers and Barbara Stuchfield (Pen and Sword, 2018). These give useful background information on what it would have been like to work there – sometimes with very detailed information on what it was like to be a nurse in that institution. The RCN Library holds reference copies of some hospital histories, as does the Wellcome Library.

Some hospitals have web pages on their history, occasionally with specific history of nursing content, such as this [Nursing History at Northampton General Hospital](#).

Hospital-based archives

Some hospitals maintain their own archives. These include:

University College London Hospitals NHS Trust [Archive](#) - UCL hospitals include: The Middlesex Hospital; The Hospital for Women, Soho; St Peter's Group; The Eastman Dental Hospital; The Hospital for Tropical Diseases and The National Temperance Hospital.

St Bartholomew's Hospital Archive and the Royal London Hospital run a combined service at [Barts Health Archives](#) - include records for the following hospitals: St Bartholomew's Hospital Archives; Royal London Hospital, The Alexandra Hospital for Children with Hip Disease; The Eastern and the Homerton Hospital; The German Hospital; The Hackney Hospital; The Metropolitan Hospital; The Mothers' Hospital; St Leonard's Hospital and St Marks Hospital.

[Imperial College Hospital Archives](#) include the records of Charing Cross, Hammersmith, Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea and St Mary's hospitals.

In Cambridge there is the [Addenbrookes NHS Trust Archives](#).

[Oxfordshire Health Archives](#) has a useful historical [list of hospitals](#) in Oxfordshire, with details of any known surviving archives. They hold archives for:

The Radcliffe Guild of Nurses. The alumni organisation for nurses who trained at the Radcliffe and associated hospitals. Memorabilia 1920-1991, photographs 1897-1975, uniforms and medical instruments.

The Wingfield League. The alumni organisation for [nurses](#) and staff of the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre. Records of the League 1955-1996, photographs 1934-1994 and memorabilia 1917-1996

Health boards

In Scotland, hospital records were the responsibility of the Health Board (or Service) for each region. These records have mostly been absorbed into university archives when the universities took over the role of training nurses, such as:

- [NHS Grampian Archives](#) held by the University of Aberdeen.
- [Lothian Health Services Archive](#), held by the University of Edinburgh which has online guidance on their [records about nurses](#).
- [NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Archives](#) held by the University of Glasgow Archives.

Nurses' leagues

The records of nurses' leagues are a great source for personal names and details of individual nurses. The first nurses' league was formed in 1899 as an association for the trained nurses of St Bartholomew's Hospital. It was a great success and many of the larger hospitals had leagues, which published a regular magazine for alumni to keep in touch. With the movement of nurse education into higher education, some leagues have become university alumni associations, and only a few remain. Magazines and records of Nurses' Leagues may survive in hospital archives, local record offices and local history libraries.

Few if any Nursing League records have been digitised. There is an incomplete but reasonably good run of the *Stirling Royal Infirmary Nurses' League* magazine which has been digitised. It is held by the NHS Forth Valley Archive who have made it available on their [JSTOR collections page](#).

Each magazine contains a full list of the League's members and there are regular notices of births, deaths and marriages along with examination results and prize givings. This is typical of a Nurses League Magazine.

Census

The census is a population survey taken every 10 years, which commenced in 1801. From 1841 onwards, the census records include information on individuals and may indicate or confirm that your ancestor was a nurse or midwife. The census records their address, which may be a hospital or a nurses' home. For many nineteenth-century nurses the census is the only surviving record of their career. The returns for individual hospitals, workhouses and asylums list everyone present in the building on census night, although patients or inmates are sometimes only recorded by their initials.

It is important to note that census returns use a variety of occupational terms to describe nurses. They are sometimes classed as domestic servants with responsibilities for childcare. Some of the other terms used include:

- Subordinate or Subsidiary Medical Services (abbreviated to SMS)
- 'Poor Law Officials' (sometimes used to describe nurses in Poor Law Hospitals).
- Monthly Nurse
- Sick Nurse
- Attendant or Ward Attendant.

It should be noted that a person recorded in the census as a 'nurse' did not necessarily have any formal nursing training or qualifications.

England and Wales: [The National Archives Census Guide](#) records for 1841-1921 gives an overview of how to access these online. Local county record offices tend to have the returns for their own respective county and sometimes for adjoining counties.

There is a useful [Guide to Records](#) for searching records of births, marriages, deaths, adoptions and civil partnerships.

Scotland: The National Records of Scotland's website [Scotland's People](#) is dedicated to family history research, including access to the online 1841-1911 censuses.

Ireland and Northern Ireland: unfortunately, little information survives from the Irish censuses for 1841-1891. 1901 and 1911 census for Ireland are available to search on the web (via the National Archives). Contact the [Public Record Office for Northern Ireland](#) and the [National Archives of Ireland](#). No census was taken in Ireland/Northern Ireland in 1921 owing to the War of Independence.

This will greatly add to our knowledge of nursing staff as the 1921 census required information about the profession and branch within it. It asked for the place of work and their employer's name. Marital status, including divorce was required for those over 15 years old. It asked questions on part time and full-time education which could help track nursing staff.

The 1921 Census was released January 2021 and is available online via FindMyPast, and onsite at The National Archives, Archives+ in Manchester and the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth. In terms of occupation and employment, the 1921 Census asked for details of the nature of employment, the capacity in which they were employed, to list the employer if they had one, and the place they were employed. The census makes enquiries about whether individuals were in full or part time training or education. Some of the nurses' homes feature as institutions (owing to the scale of their occupancy) which may be useful for young women in the early stages of their career. As indicated elsewhere in this guide, nurses often lived onsite at their workplace, so this census will reflect this in the entries. The data in the 1921 Census is searchable by occupation so this offers interesting possibilities for research, particularly for those researching local or hospital histories.

The 1921 census may be used in conjunction with the 1922 state register of nursing to build up a wider picture of those who registered with the GNC; the Census will include several people who did not register themselves as nurses with the GNC but who self-identified as nurses.

The 1921 Census is particularly important as the 1931 Census returns were destroyed in a fire and the 1941 Census did not take place due to the Second World War.

Beginners' guides to using the census and more specialised publications can be purchased from the [Federation of Family History Societies](#).

Trade and Post Office directories

Nurses and midwives are sometimes listed in eighteenth and nineteenth-century trade and Post Office directories. For England and Wales, these publications can be found in most County Record Offices and some public libraries.

Digital versions of 700 [Scottish post office directories](#) for 28 towns in Scotland, spanning the period 1773-1911, may be searched free of charge.

Selected [street directories for Northern Ireland](#) are available to search via the Public Records Office for Northern Ireland.

Specialist archives

The Royal British Nurses Association (RBNA). [Kings College London](#) holds the records of the RBNA.

The RCN Archives holds a copy of the RBNA membership register, covering the first 10,000 members from March 1890 to June 1966.

[Pioneering Nurses](#) is a free online transcript of the first 1,000 entries in the British Nurses' Association register. It includes some brief biographies of individual nurses (backgrounds, training and professional achievements).

[The Royal College of Psychiatrists](#) holds the records of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, which trained and registered Mental Nurses or Attendants. The RMPA is seen as the beginnings of learning disability nursing and of mental health nursing. They have an online overview of their [Nursing Examination Records \(including Registers of successful candidates 1891-1951\)](#).

Midwifery records

The Midwives Act 1902 (England & Wales only) enabled the state enrolment of midwives and established the Central Midwives Board (CMB) for England & Wales. The Midwives Institute, established in the 1880s and known from 1941 as the Royal College of Midwives, played a crucial role in the application of the Act. Practising midwives were given until 1910 to enrol with the CMB.

A Midwives Act was not passed for Scotland until 1915, but Scotland had by then learned valuable lessons from the experience of the CMB for England and Wales and drew upon these in setting up the CMB for Scotland. In each country, the CMB operated independently from the GNC or from any nursing infrastructure, although many midwives were also qualified nurses.

- [The Royal College of Midwives \(RCM\) Library](#) has transferred their archive including midwifery certification and membership to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG). The archives can be accessed by contacting the [RCOG library](#).
- RCOG has a useful [midwifery family history guide](#).
- The Midwives Roll, 1904-1959 is available to search on Ancestry. You can locate the Midwives Rolls by following the instructions in Appendix One but replacing 'Nursing' with 'Midwives' in the Ancestry 'card catalogue' search. This collection was created from the Wellcome Library's copies of the Roll. Records include details of the individual's name, address and date of enrolment. Physical copies of the Roll are held as follows:
 - The CMB England & Wales Roll of Midwives, 1902-1983 is held at the National Archives at Kew.
 - The RCN Archives holds copies of the CMB Scotland Roll of Midwives, 1917-1968; the CMB England & Wales Roll of Midwives, 1981-1984; and the JNMC Northern Ireland Roll of Midwives for 1959 only.
 - The CMB Ireland Roll and Register of Midwives, 1919-1985, and Registers of Pupil and First Certified Midwives, 1938-1983, are held at University College Dublin Archives.

Defence nursing records

In 2021 [The National Archives](#) website had six guides related to military nursing. These include links to online lists of nurses that are available to search and details of physical records available for research

No Army Nursing Service records dating from before 1902 are known to be in The National Archives.

- [British Army nurses.](#)
- [British Army nurses' service records 1914-1918](#) over 15,000 individual nurse records available to search online.
- [Royal Air Force nurses.](#)
- [Royal Navy nurses and medical officers.](#)
- [Military nursing.](#)
- [Nurses in the Crimea.](#)

For service records of the Queen Alexandra Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC) 1939-1945, write to:

- Ministry of Defence, Army Personnel Centre, Historic Disclosures, Mailpoint 400, Kentigern House, 65 Brown Street, Glasgow G2 8EX.

[The Forces War Records](#) website includes online indices of some nursing units - charges apply to some of the content in this site

- [WW1 & WW2 Nurses Records](#)
- [QA Royal Naval Nursing Service](#)

Service Museums – The following have very interesting collections which give wider context to your nurse's experiences, so are worth visiting. However, please note that the Service Museums do not hold personnel service records.

- The [Museum of Military Medicine](#) (formerly the Army Medical Services Museum) in Aldershot
- The [Royal Naval Museum](#) in Portsmouth
- [The Royal Air Force Museum](#) in London and Cosford.

British Army nurses

The QARANC Association and QARANC Association Heritage Committee manage a website on [British Army Nurses](#). This is the official site for the history and heritage of the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps and its antecedents.

The website has a growing number of resources, including an index of the nurses awarded the [Royal Red Cross](#).

The website [Scarlet Finders](#) has some very useful resources – please note that this website is no longer being updated.

British Red Cross 'VADs'

The Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) were started by the Red Cross and St John's Ambulance Service to help army medical services during World War One (1914-1918) and World War Two (1939-1945). The volunteers were trained in first aid and other skills. During the Second World War they came under the jurisdiction of the military despite being civilians. Information on the VADs' wide range of roles can be found at the [Imperial War Museum](#).

The British Red Cross has its own [Museum and Archive](#). As part of First World War commemorations, the service records for [British Red Cross VADs](#) were digitised and indexed. This free online resource allows you to search by name as well as by location – a benefit to local historians.

Poor law and workhouse nursing

Details of individual nurses and the local history of nursing is also found in poor law and workhouse records. England had a comprehensive system of poor relief, funded by local (parish) taxes, known as rates, dating back to 1601. Scotland had something similar but more rudimentary. In England this is referred to as the 'Old Poor Law' where individual parishes were responsible for caring for the sick, infirm and elderly as well as dealing with the unemployed. Certain parishes had workhouses or poor houses, some of which employed nurses. If records exist, they can be found in county record offices. Similar records exist for Scotland. The 'New Poor Law' was introduced in England and Wales in 1834, 1838 in Ireland and similar provision in Scotland in 1845. The new system in England and Wales set up a central administration in London and over 500 poor law unions (groups of parishes). Scotland maintained the parochial system with a new national supervisory board.

Poor relief could be given to applicants in the community or within the workhouse. These were designed to be harsh, forbidding places, to dissuade able-bodied men from using them. Many of the people who had no choice were the elderly, children, infirm, sick, mentally ill and those with a learning disability, such as people requiring care. As the nineteenth century progressed nursing staff were employed as part of poor law provisions, though the quality of care delivered was variable; often paupers without nurse training or qualifications were utilised. Workhouses had sick and lying-in wards or separate infirmaries where nurses attended to patients, under the directions of the Medical Officer. Midwives were employed by some unions.

Surviving records in England are of two types: individual Poor Law union records are held by local authority record offices. These do include staff registers where they have survived. Few of these have been digitised, so researchers will need to visit the record office to access the physical records.

At a national level The National Archives hold staff registers for all unions in England and Wales (Series MH9) and again they have not been digitised. Recording of nurses mainly occurred from the 1860s. Series MH12 contains correspondence from Poor Law unions, including appointment forms for individual nurses from the 1840s onwards. [The Workhouse](#) website run by Peter Higginbotham gives extensive information on workhouses, how they were run, and details of where local records survive. The National Archives has useful guides on [Poor Law](#) and on [Workhouse Inmates and Staff](#).

The National Records for Scotland has produced a guide to [finding poor law records in Scotland](#) Both the websites of the Public Record Office for Northern Ireland and the National Archives of Ireland can be searched for poor law records which may include records of nursing staff.

District nursing

The Queen's Nursing Institute (QNI), founded in 1887 has a useful overview of [QNI history](#) on its website. Believed to be the oldest nursing charity in the world it was established to train and support district nurses – for example, nurses working in local communities. They have a [QNI Heritage Website](#) which provides useful information and photographs on their history.

The 'UK & Ireland, Queen's Nursing Institute Roll of Nurses, 1891-1931' have been digitised and are available via Ancestry. [The Wellcome Trust](#) holds the original registers and additional records of the Queens Nursing Institute (QNI). These are the records for district nursing in England and Wales, not for the whole of the UK as Ancestry implies.

The Queens Nursing Institute for Scotland (QNIS) is a separate charity and has its own [QNIS History](#) available online. [The RCN Archive](#) holds the records of QNIS including a card index of the names and service histories of district nurses (deceased).

For Ireland, the Archives of University College Dublin hold Registers of 'Jubilee' Nurses, 1890-1967.

Mental health and asylums

The National Archives has a useful guide to records related to [mental health and asylums](#).

[The Asylums List](#) is a useful resource, listing asylums by name, location and county, indicating which have been demolished and which are still in use.

[The Museum of the Mind](#) holds the archives of Bethlem Royal Hospital (south-east London), the Maudsley Hospital (south London) and Warlingham Park Hospital (Surrey). They have digitised their staff registers up to 1932 with [Find My Past](#). Digitised patient records to 1913 are available via Find My Past - nurses also appear as patients at Bethlem.

When searching for your ancestor, remember that Mental health nurses were referred to "attendants" up to at least 1900; after 1900 the term remained in use, especially for men.

Historic Hospitals, an online architectural gazetteer has a section dedicated to [Mental Hospitals in Britain and Ireland](#). This has useful lists of hospitals with dates, information on where they were located, and what they looked like. This may give a useful overview if you are unsure which hospital your ancestor worked at.

Additional employers

Nurses have been employed in a wide variety of settings including prisons, factories, schools, charities or friendly societies. Nurses have often filled occupational health roles in industrial and office settings. You may find a mention of your ancestor in surviving records or staff magazines.

Religious orders often had nuns who were nurses, working within the community or as missionaries. Check if the religious order has any surviving archives for details of your ancestor. Check for the archives of the local church nearest to where your ancestor was based as there is often cross over within the community.

Try by searching The National Archives to find out if any organisational records survive. If you know the original location of the organisation, ask the local record office if they know of any surviving records.

Occasionally organisations, such as Boots (which employed nurses in their shops) or Sainsbury's, have large archives where you can find out if there are any surviving staff records.

Many archives have online catalogues available to search for surviving organisational archives. Remember that you are unlikely to find the name of your ancestor in the catalogue. Instead, you are looking for places your ancestor may be mentioned, staff records, staff registers, payroll lists, annual reports or staff magazines.

Nursing journals

Matrons, assistant matrons, superintendents and nursing leaders are often named in the nursing press. Journals can help to trace awards, military postings, promotions and obituaries. They also hold a number of stories on workplaces, such as openings, events, or local people. Many historic nursing journals are available through the RCN Library.

Twenty-two historic nursing journals from the RCN collections are now available online through a collaboration with Gale's *Women's Studies Archive* programme: *Female Forerunners Worldwide*. The full list of national and international nursing journals dating from 1891-1986 is:

Australian Bush Nursing Journal; The Australian Nurses' Journal; Bedside Nurse; The British Red Cross; Society Quarterly Review; The Catholic Nurse; District Nursing; Gown and Gloves; The International Nursing Bulletin; Jamaican Nurse; Nigerian Nurse; The Nightingale Fellowship Journal; Nurse Education News; Nurses' Journal of the Pacific Coast; Nursing Notes; The Nursing Record; Nursing Times; Philippine Journal of Nursing; Quarterly Journal for Chinese Nurses; Queen's Nurses' Magazine; South African Nursing Journal; The Trained Nurse; and The Zambia Nurse

All RCN members (full, student and retired) can find out more about the [RCN historic nursing journals and access](#) using their membership login details. For non-members, access is mainly provided through academic libraries including the British Library – you may need to ask your librarian to arrange access.

One of the oldest journals held at the RCN Library is also freely available to browse and search online: [British Journal of Nursing / Nursing Record 1888-1956](#).

Oral history collections and personal papers

Many archives hold oral history interviews with or personal paper collections of nurses. Often these name nurses they were trained by, worked with or became friends with. It is worth checking catalogues or online indexes for the names of your ancestor, or of people they had known relationships with just in case you come across a connection. It is highly unlikely that you will discover a connection this way, but it is worth considering – especially if your ancestor held a significant position, such as matron or sister-tutor.

Awards, news stories and malpractice

There are many other records where nurses are identified such as:

- **National awards** listed in [The Gazette](#) 1665-present. These awards include OBEs, MBEs, wartime despatches, and similar. Freely searchable by name.
- **National and local news stories** can be found in the [British Library Newspaper Archive](#) these include obituaries, appointments and local news and events. Freely searchable by name, there is a fee for accessing the online content.

Mistakes and malpractice occasionally result in court records. These are usually physical records held in local record offices. One notable exception is the freely searchable [Old Bailey](#) online. This includes testimony given by nurses and matrons as reliable witnesses.

Migration and Nursing

Professional nurses have skills that are often in high demand. Nurses migrate across the globe, bringing them and their families social and economic benefits. This includes nurses coming to the UK, but also nurses emigrating overseas.

Useful books about nurses migrating to the UK include:

- *Family History on the Move: Where Your Ancestors Went and Why* by Mark Pearsall, Roger Kershaw (The National Archives 2006).
- *Against the Odds, Black and Minority Ethnic Clinicians and Manchester 1948 to 2009* by Emma L Jones and Stephanie Snow (Manchester 2010).
- *Many Rivers to Cross – the History of the Caribbean Contribution to the NHS* Ann Kramer (Sugar Media 2006).
- *Ireland's Loss Britain's Gain: Irish Nurses in Britain Nightingale to Millennium* by Ethel Corduff (Rainbow Valley Books 2021).

Useful online resources about migration to the UK include:

- The National Archives [Migration Guides](#).
- [Moving Here](#) archived website – not updated since 2013, this remains a useful resource.
- [Southwark Guide to Caribbean Family History](#)
- The Guardian published an article on [Researching your Caribbean family history](#) in 2007 which remains useful.
- Exploring Surrey's Past website February 2022 had a useful page on [Black Health Care Workers in Surrey](#). Also, the Surrey History Trust hosted a talk in October 2021 by Dr Catherine Babikian on [West Park Hospital character books, 1924 to 1969: overseas nurses in the NHS](#).
- The Families in British India Society (FIBIS) have produced a [nursing guide](#) for searching nursing ancestry in India during the colonial period. It covers civil nursing (training, hospitals, registration, associations, journals), religious orders and military nursing. It has useful links to online and physical resources.
- The RCN Historic Nursing Journals include a number of overseas titles, such as *Australian Nurses Journal*, *Nigerian Nurse* or *Philippine Journal of Nursing* – details are given in the above section 'Nursing Journals'. These give details of nurses coming to the UK, but also of nurses moving or returning to other countries.

Nurse training came with student accommodation in nurses' homes – this was very attractive for migrant women. There were strict rules for student homes, which helped make nursing a respectable career for young women away from their families. Student nursing homes for male students were less common, except for some mental health nurse training schools. Migrant male student nurses experienced real difficulties to find accommodation with many facing 'No blacks, no dogs, no Irish' signs well into the 1980s.

Nurse training schools across the UK taught migrant nurses, not just places like London or Bristol. For those that came with government backed schemes, their early careers were sometimes tracked in official records held at The National Archives. This was especially the case for those who were on schemes where they were expected to pay the British government back the money for the fare to England. More details can be found in the physical records held at The National Archives, such as this Ministry of Health file:

[MH 55/2157](#) *Nursing recruitment: migration of nurses to and from United Kingdom 1947-1962.*

Nurse registration in British colonial countries were sometimes recognised in reciprocal arrangements. These are detailed in the preface of each GNC register (see image below) and changed over time. Some nurses trained in the UK, returned home to practice, and joined the register in their country (or occasionally vice versa). Many British nurses have emigrated, developing their careers overseas.

Nurses also migrate from Britain to other countries. Records include:

- [Overseas Nursing Association](#) (previously known as the Colonial Nursing Association) 1896-1966, records of which are held at the Bodleian Library and at the National Archives
- [The Colonial Nursing Service](#) 1896-1966, records of which are held at The National Archives



Further reading

Tracing Your Medical Ancestors, A Guide for Family Historians by Michelle Higgs (Pen and Sword 2011).

The RCN [History of Nursing Library Subject Guide](#) gives a useful overview of resources.

The RCN Library holds many nursing memoirs from different places and time periods which you may find interesting.

Paid for research services

If you need help in carrying out research, especially onsite research at archive offices then the following lists of researchers may be of help:

- [Register of Qualified Genealogists](#).
- [Find A Researcher : AGRA : Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives](#).
- [List of Freelance Consultants \(archives.org.uk\)](#) – search for genealogical research.

History of nursing networks

Royal College of Nursing members are encouraged to join the [RCN History of Nursing Forum](#).

The [UK Association for the History of Nursing](#) is open to anyone with an interest in history of nursing, they hold an annual symposium.

There are some local history of nursing networks in the UK such as the [Nottingham Nursing History Group](#) which was active in 2021 or the Bournemouth group [Memories of Nursing](#).

The [European Association for the History of Nursing](#) is useful – their list of [member organisations](#) gives an indication of the wider network of history of nursing groups; there are similar associations across the world.

Social Media hashtags **#HistNursing** and **#HistMed** are useful ways to identify content and people actively research the history of nursing.

History of nursing at the RCN

The RCN holds significant [library and archive collections](#), mostly dating from the 1860s to date, focusing on nursing activity in the UK.

The largest library collection is held at the main library in London, and holds the historic journals, rare books, and historical books. The Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff libraries all hold reference books reflecting the history of nursing in their countries; these are all included in the RCN Library catalogue.

The RCN Library holds many memoirs and biographies, many of these are self-published and cannot be located anywhere else. If you want to research more on what life was like for your ancestor these can be a useful resource.

The RCN Archive has a growing number of [brief online biographies](#) for key nurses who were active in the RCN, or whose papers they hold.

The RCN runs an [exhibition and event programme](#) much of which is open to the public both onsite and online. Many of the past exhibitions and events are made available online.

History of nursing collections

Museums holding nursing material include the [Florence Nightingale Museum](#), the [University of Chester Riverside Museum](#) and the [University of Dundee Tayside Medical History Museum](#) which has a [Nursing History Guide](#).

The freely available [Florence Nightingale Digitization Website](#) allows researchers to search the original letters of Florence Nightingale – including by personal names.

International archive collections include the [Barbara Bates Centre for the History of Nursing](#) in the USA.

The [London Museums of Health and Medicine](#) are all interesting places to visit. Most run events programmes.

Appendix One: How to search the nursing registers on Ancestry

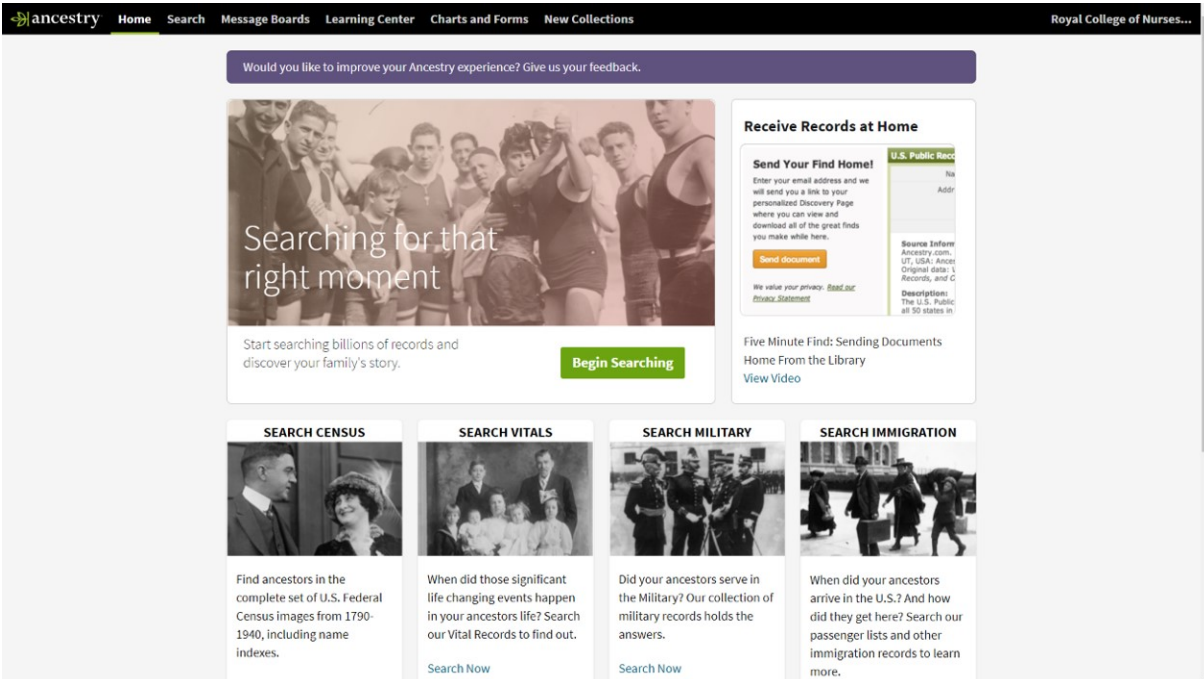
In 2016, the RCN Archive copies of the GNC Registers were digitised via Ancestry; and contain over 1.6 million names. It is the largest set of historic information on a single profession available in the UK.

By limiting your search to the nursing registers, you will get better results which are easier to browse.

The Register was an annual publication. For many years an individual nurse's name appeared every year – Ancestry have stripped out most of these 'duplicate' entries from the index. You can browse by year to check for specific names in specific years – you may be able to see the name in the digital copy even if it does not appear in the index.

How to search the registers by personal name

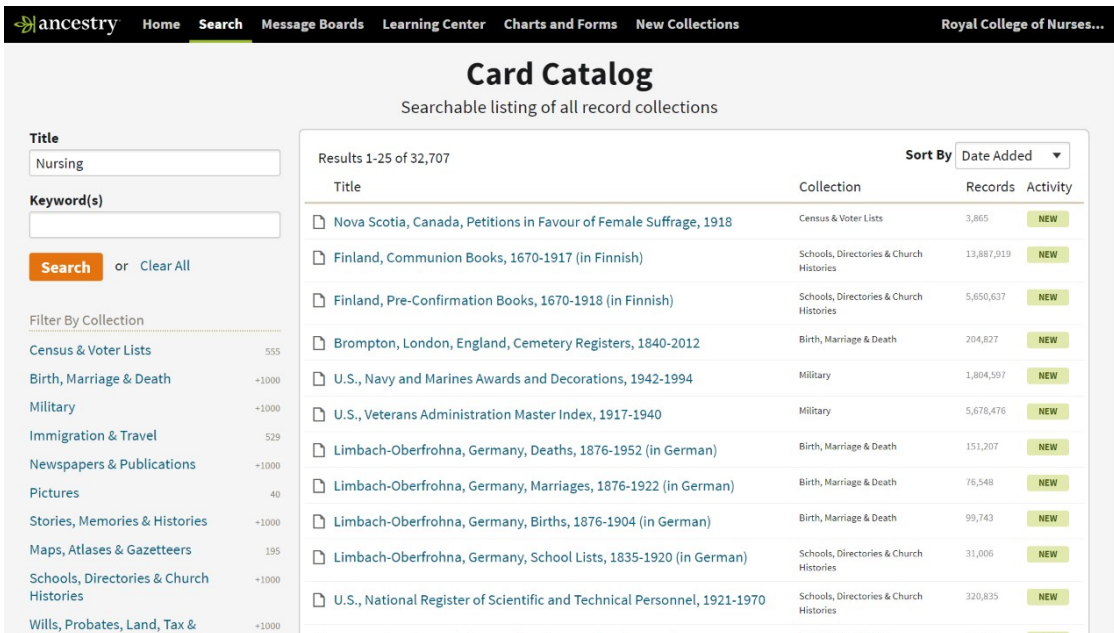
Go to Ancestry www.ancestry.co.uk



The screenshot shows the Ancestry website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, Search, Message Boards, Learning Center, Charts and Forms, and New Collections. A feedback banner asks, "Would you like to improve your Ancestry experience? Give us your feedback." The main content area features a large banner with the text "Searching for that right moment" and a "Begin Searching" button. To the right, there is a "Receive Records at Home" section with a "Send Your Find Home!" form and a "Send document" button. Below the main banner, there are four search categories: SEARCH CENSUS, SEARCH VITALS, SEARCH MILITARY, and SEARCH IMMIGRATION, each with a small image and a brief description of the records available.

Click on the **Search** tab in the menu (top left).

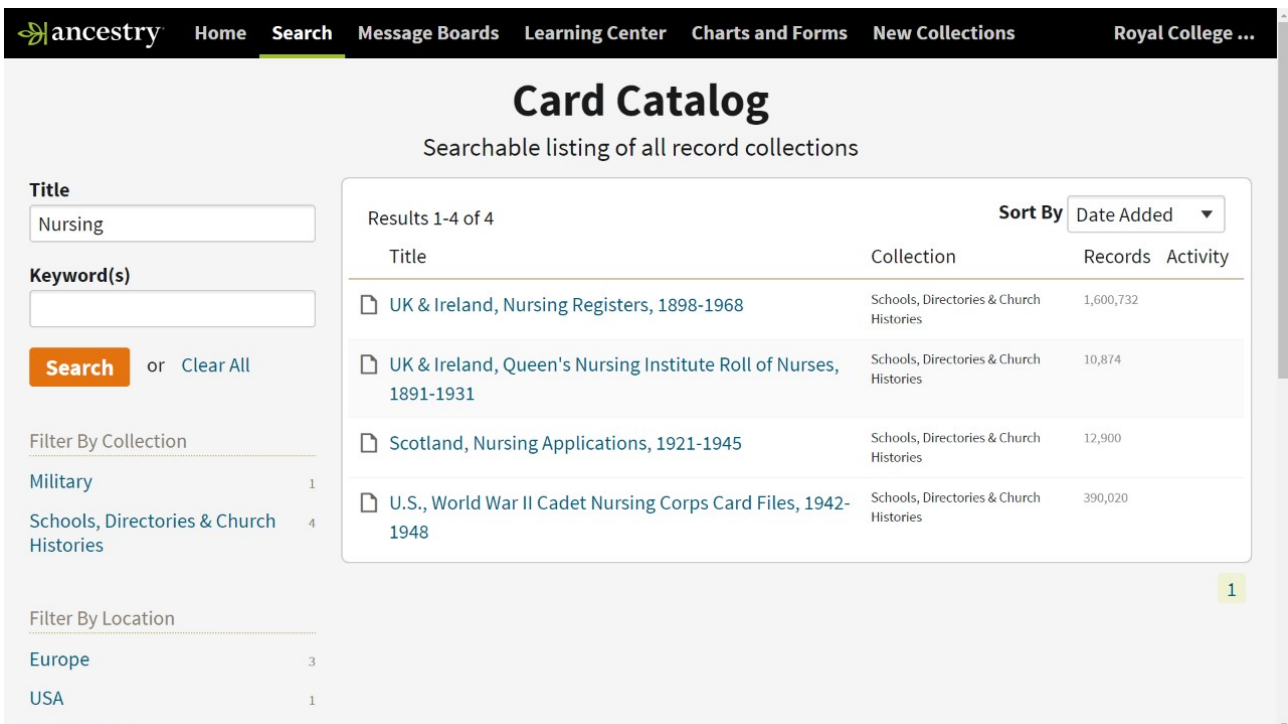
Click on **card catalogue** and Search for **Title = Nursing**. You will get these results.



The screenshot shows the Ancestry Card Catalog search results for the keyword 'Nursing'. The search results are sorted by 'Date Added' and show 32,707 results. The first few results are:

Title	Collection	Records	Activity
Nova Scotia, Canada, Petitions in Favour of Female Suffrage, 1918	Census & Voter Lists	3,865	NEW
Finland, Communion Books, 1670-1917 (in Finnish)	Schools, Directories & Church Histories	13,887,019	NEW
Finland, Pre-Confirmation Books, 1670-1918 (in Finnish)	Schools, Directories & Church Histories	5,650,637	NEW
Brompton, London, England, Cemetery Registers, 1840-2012	Birth, Marriage & Death	204,827	NEW
U.S., Navy and Marines Awards and Decorations, 1942-1994	Military	1,804,597	NEW
U.S., Veterans Administration Master Index, 1917-1940	Military	5,678,476	NEW
Limbach-Oberfrohna, Germany, Deaths, 1876-1952 (in German)	Birth, Marriage & Death	151,207	NEW
Limbach-Oberfrohna, Germany, Marriages, 1876-1922 (in German)	Birth, Marriage & Death	76,548	NEW
Limbach-Oberfrohna, Germany, Births, 1876-1904 (in German)	Birth, Marriage & Death	99,743	NEW
Limbach-Oberfrohna, Germany, School Lists, 1835-1920 (in German)	Schools, Directories & Church Histories	31,006	NEW
U.S., National Register of Scientific and Technical Personnel, 1921-1970	Schools, Directories & Church Histories	320,835	NEW

Note - If you are looking for a midwife carry out the 'Nursing' Search first; most midwives were required to first qualify as a nurse. Then repeat this step but search for **Title = Midwives** and you will be able to search the Roll of Midwives.



The screenshot shows the Ancestry Card Catalog search results for the keyword 'Nursing'. The search results are sorted by 'Date Added' and show 4 results. The results are:

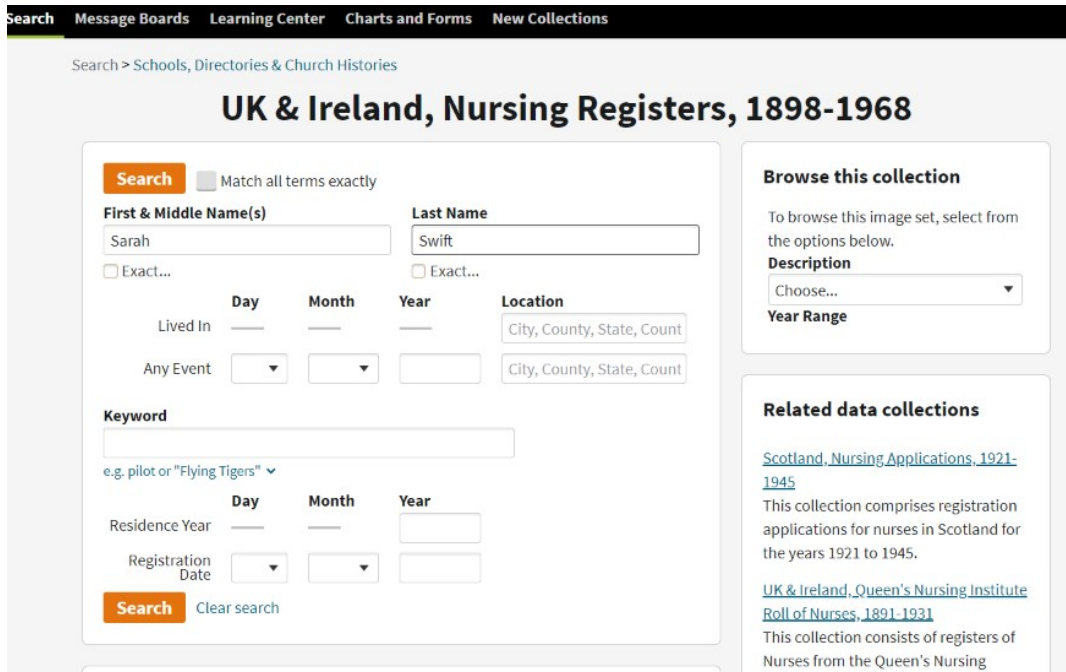
Title	Collection	Records	Activity
UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1898-1968	Schools, Directories & Church Histories	1,600,732	
UK & Ireland, Queen's Nursing Institute Roll of Nurses, 1891-1931	Schools, Directories & Church Histories	10,874	
Scotland, Nursing Applications, 1921-1945	Schools, Directories & Church Histories	12,900	
U.S., World War II Cadet Nursing Corps Card Files, 1942-1948	Schools, Directories & Church Histories	390,020	

Most queries will be resolved by choosing **UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1898-1968**

This collection includes the General Nursing Council Register, the Royal College of Nursing's 1920s register, and some early Burdett lists of nurses.

You can search by name, which is useful if you are searching for a known individual.

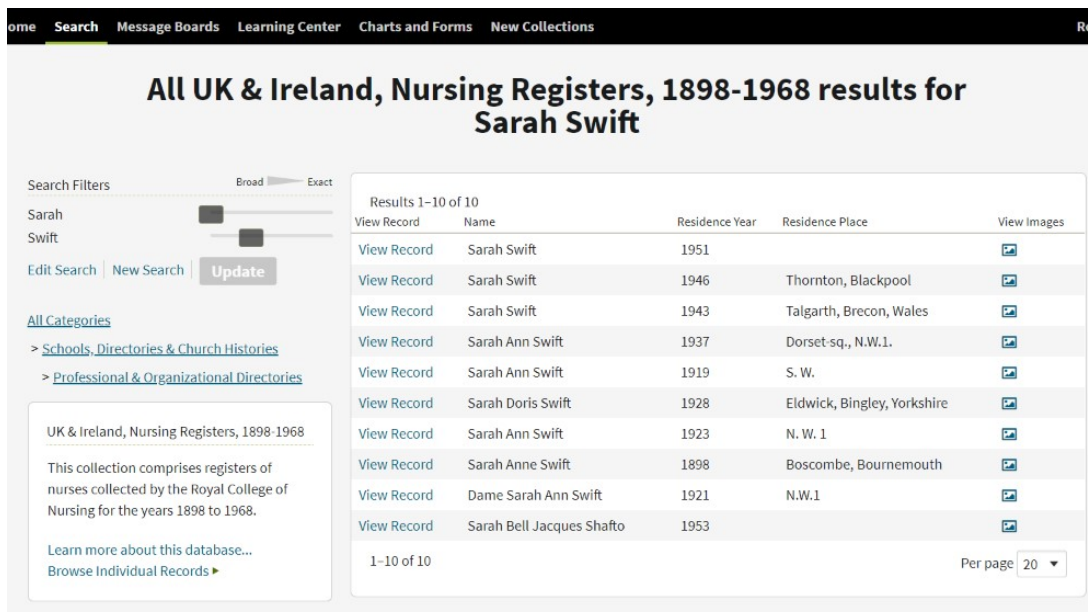
Here's an example: Sarah Swift: Enter first name Sarah Last name Swift.



The screenshot shows a search interface with the following elements:

- Search Bar:** Contains 'Sarah' and 'Swift'.
- Match all terms exactly:** A checkbox that is currently unchecked.
- Exact...:** Two checkboxes for 'Exact...' under 'First & Middle Name(s)' and 'Last Name'.
- Lived In:** Fields for Day, Month, Year, and Location (City, County, State, Count).
- Any Event:** A dropdown menu and a Location field.
- Keyword:** A text input field with a dropdown menu showing 'e.g. pilot or "Flying Tigers"'. Below it are fields for Residence Year, Registration Date, and Year.
- Search Button:** An orange button labeled 'Search' and a 'Clear search' link.
- Browse this collection:** A section with a description, a 'Description' dropdown menu, and a 'Year Range' field.
- Related data collections:** A list of links to other collections: 'Scotland, Nursing Applications, 1921-1945', 'UK & Ireland, Queen's Nursing Institute Roll of Nurses, 1891-1931', and 'This collection consists of registers of Nurses from the Queen's Nursing'.

Use the dates and places to help you identify the right person.



The screenshot shows search results for 'Sarah Swift' with the following elements:

- Search Filters:** A sidebar with 'Sarah' and 'Swift' entered, and an 'Update' button.
- All Categories:** Links to 'Schools, Directories & Church Histories' and 'Professional & Organizational Directories'.
- UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1898-1968:** A text box describing the collection and a link to 'Browse Individual Records'.
- Results 1-10 of 10:** A table with columns: View Record, Name, Residence Year, Residence Place, and View Images.
- Page Information:** '1-10 of 10' and 'Per page 20'.

View Record	Name	Residence Year	Residence Place	View Images
View Record	Sarah Swift	1951		View Images
View Record	Sarah Swift	1946	Thornton, Blackpool	View Images
View Record	Sarah Swift	1943	Talgarth, Brecon, Wales	View Images
View Record	Sarah Ann Swift	1937	Dorset-sq., N.W.1.	View Images
View Record	Sarah Ann Swift	1919	S. W.	View Images
View Record	Sarah Doris Swift	1928	Eldwick, Bingley, Yorkshire	View Images
View Record	Sarah Ann Swift	1923	N. W. 1	View Images
View Record	Sarah Anne Swift	1898	Boscombe, Bournemouth	View Images
View Record	Dame Sarah Ann Swift	1921	N.W.1	View Images
View Record	Sarah Bell Jacques Shafto	1953		View Images

When you click on 'view record', at the top of the frame, it will tell you the date of the volume you are looking at.

Tracing Nurses

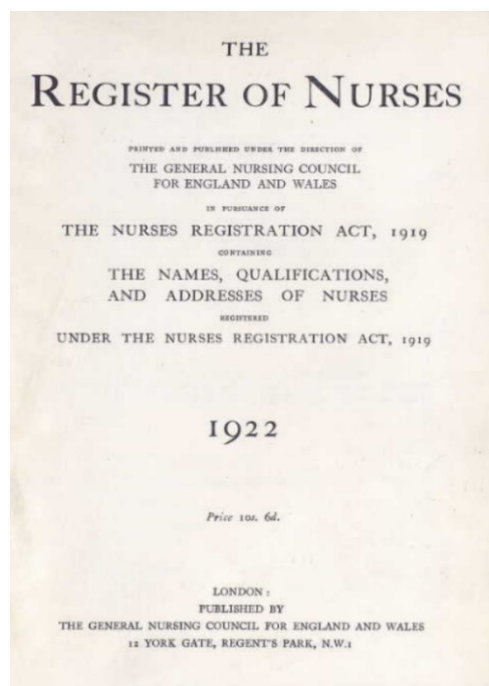
This is the College of Nursing (later the RCN)'s membership register which contains thousands of entries. It covers 1916-1919, the years just before the Nurses Registration Act was passed.

Sarah Swift was Registered number 1, given in recognition of her commitment to the College and the campaign for the state registration of nurses.

The register gives home address and importantly where she trained.

UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1898-1968 for Sarah Ann Swift					
Register of Nurses > 1916-1919					
9290	1918	Swanson, Margaret Sutherland	Swanson's Buildings, Castletown, Thurso, Scotland	Manchester Union, Crumpsall Infirmary	1917
7971	1918	Swanton, Nellie Josephine	Ards House, Glandore, Co. Cork, Ireland	Barrington's Hospital, Limerick	1917
10535	1918	Swanwick, Daisy Wilhelmine	General Hospital, Nottingham	General Hospital, Nottingham	1918
1006	1916	Swarbrick, Lily Rigby	Union Infirmary, Gawber Road, Barnsley, Yorks	Birmingham Union, Dudley Road Infirmary	1903
7972	1918	Sweeney, Agnes Rose	c/o Mrs. Anscombe, Iveleon, High Street, Aldershot, Hants, England	Belfast Union Infirmary, Belfast	1907
12868	1919	Sweet, Lillie May	Curyen Road, Aylesbone Park, Leicester	Derbyshire Royal Infirmary, Derby	1915
604	1916	Sweet-Escott, Florence Emily	St. Thomas's Hospital, S.E.	St. Thomas's Hospital, London	1915
6785	1918	Sweeting, Harriet Ella	75, Cowbridge Road, Cardiff, South Wales	Royal Infirmary, Gloucester	1910
9930	1918	Swift (née Walsh), Anna Maria	Cloneygath, Monasterevan, Co. Kildare, Ireland	Poor Law Infirmary, Leicester	1910
11034	1918	Swift, Lilian Caroline	9, Percy Street, Liverpool	Royal Infirmary, Liverpool	1909
1	1916	Swift (Dame), Sarah Ann	48, Primrose Mansions, S.W.	Royal Infirmary, Dundee	1880
11858	1919	Swift, Susan Dorothy	Middlesex War Hospital, Clacton-on-Sea	Middlesex Hospital, London	1918

The State Register was published by the General Nursing Council between 1922 – 1968. After that it became a database, now held by the Nursing and Midwifery Council. Being on the register became mandatory from 1943.

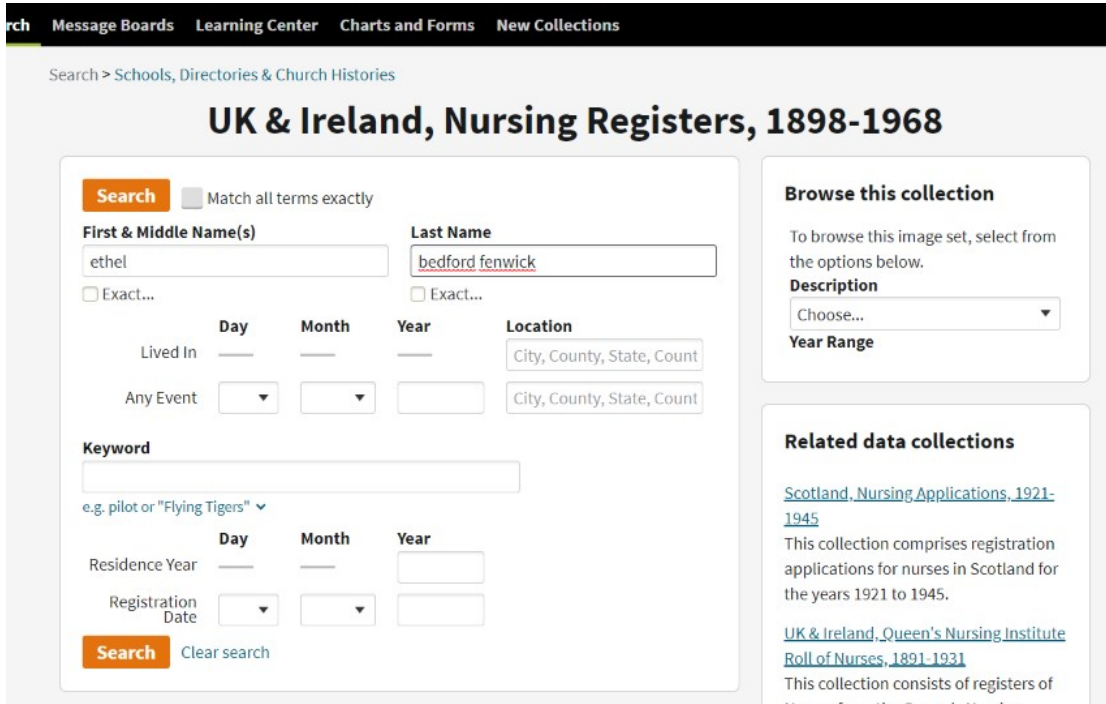


Tracing Nurses

Women are often known by different names. The GNC Registers included both maiden names and married names where applicable, and Ancestry have indexed these.

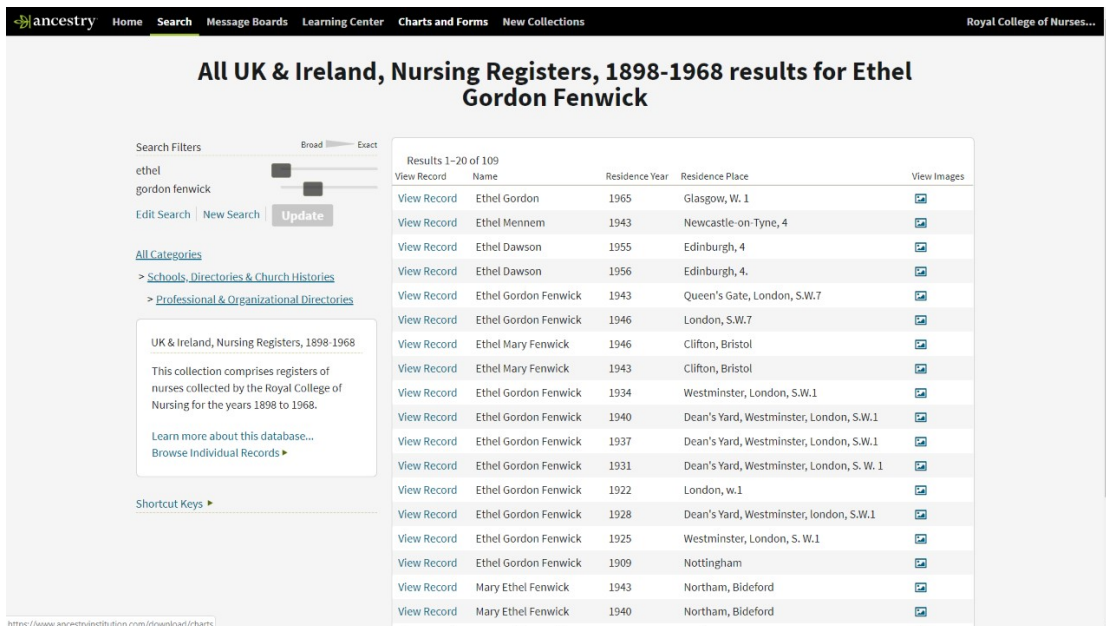
This makes the Registers a particularly useful resource for researching women.

Search first name = Ethel and Last Name = Gordon Fenwick.



The screenshot shows the search interface for the 'UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1898-1968' collection. The search criteria are: First & Middle Name(s) 'ethel', Last Name 'bedford fenwick'. The interface includes various filters for 'Lived In', 'Any Event', 'Keyword', 'Residence Year', and 'Registration Date'. There are also sections for 'Browse this collection' and 'Related data collections'.

The person we are looking for was active c.1922



The screenshot shows the search results for 'All UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1898-1968 results for Ethel Gordon Fenwick'. The results are displayed in a table with columns for 'View Record', 'Name', 'Residence Year', 'Residence Place', and 'View Images'. The table lists 19 records for Ethel Gordon Fenwick and one record for Mary Ethel Fenwick.

View Record	Name	Residence Year	Residence Place	View Images
View Record	Ethel Gordon	1965	Glasgow, W. 1	
View Record	Ethel Mennem	1943	Newcastle-on-Tyne, 4	
View Record	Ethel Dawson	1955	Edinburgh, 4	
View Record	Ethel Dawson	1956	Edinburgh, 4.	
View Record	Ethel Gordon Fenwick	1943	Queen's Gate, London, S.W.7	
View Record	Ethel Gordon Fenwick	1946	London, S.W.7	
View Record	Ethel Mary Fenwick	1946	Clifton, Bristol	
View Record	Ethel Mary Fenwick	1943	Clifton, Bristol	
View Record	Ethel Gordon Fenwick	1934	Westminster, London, S.W.1	
View Record	Ethel Gordon Fenwick	1940	Dean's Yard, Westminster, London, S.W.1	
View Record	Ethel Gordon Fenwick	1937	Dean's Yard, Westminster, London, S.W.1	
View Record	Ethel Gordon Fenwick	1931	Dean's Yard, Westminster, London, S. W. 1	
View Record	Ethel Gordon Fenwick	1922	London, w.1	
View Record	Ethel Gordon Fenwick	1928	Dean's Yard, Westminster, london, S.W.1	
View Record	Ethel Gordon Fenwick	1925	Westminster, London, S. W.1	
View Record	Ethel Gordon Fenwick	1909	Nottingham	
View Record	Mary Ethel Fenwick	1943	Northam, Bideford	
View Record	Mary Ethel Fenwick	1940	Northam, Bideford	

Ethel Gordon Fenwick is No 1 on the GNC registers in honour of her work leading the campaign for State Registration of Nurses.

The register gave her address, the date of her registration, and details of where she trained. It gives both her married and her maiden (née) names. It's worth noting that Ethel Gordon Fenwick was also known as Ethel Beford Fenwick, a variation that does not appear in the Register.

3947	Fennessy, Rosetta Mary (née Watson)	C/O MRS. E. Watson, 18, Clapton Passage, Clapton, London, E.5	May 19, 1921, London	born Union Infy.
I	Fenwick, Ethel Gordon (née Manson)	20, Upper Wimpole Street, London, W.1	Sept. 30, 1921, London	Tr. 1878-1879, Royal Infy., Manchester.
2050	Ferens, Margaret Sharpe	1239, Pearl Street, Alameda, California	Feb. 3, 1922, London	Cert. 1895-1900, Glasgow Royal Infy.
0	Ferens, Minnie (née ...)	Spring Hill, Cumber-	May 10, 1922,	Cert. 1905-1908, Infy.

This result is for Denzil Nurse, a man from Barbados who became a mental health nurse. Men appear throughout the registers; the mental health nursing registers tend to have higher numbers of men appearing.

UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1898-1968 for Denzil Bernard Nathaniel Nurse

Register of Nurses > 1967-1968 Save

MENTAL		MAR-NUT	
Reg. No.	Name.	Date of Registration.	Training School or Qualifications.
41867	Martin, Tinette (née Brown)	11.12.67	Highcroft Hospital, Birmingham and Glenside Hospital, Bristol.
41629	Nichols, Wendy Josephine	30.11.67	Bethlem Royal Hospital, Beckenham and Maudsley Hospital, London.
41313	Noddle, Florence Jane	8.9.67	Claybury Hospital, Woodford Green.
41561	Nolan, Yvonne	29.11.67	St. Luke's Woodside Hospital, London and Hill End Hospital, St. Albans.
41839	Nurse, Denzil Bernard Nathaniel	6.12.67	Stanley Royd Hospital, Wakefield.
41504	Nutsugah, Godfried Koblah	28.11.67	Stanley Royd Hospital, Wakefield.

III

How to search the registers for place names

For local history searches, you can search by place name. Ancestry has not indexed the registers by 'location', but place names do appear if you search for them as keywords.

Search the registers, for "Keyword = Location = Macclesfield".

UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers

Search
 Match all terms exactly

Lived In

Any Event

▼

▼

There are 853 results for Macclesfield, which gives huge potential for local history research.

ancestry
[Home](#)
[Search](#)
[Message Boards](#)
[Learning Center](#)
[Charts and Forms](#)
[New Collections](#)

All UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1898-1

Macclesfield

Your search ✎ ⋮

Broad Exact

Hide 1 field ^

Anything: Macclesfield

Apply

▼ All Categories

- ▶ Schools, Directories & Church Histories ✕
- ▶ Professional & Organizational Directories ✕

Results 801-850 of 853

	View Record	Name	Residence Year	R
	View Record	Lilian Drewitt	1928	(
	View Record	Laura Louise Duffin	1928	
	View Record	Ruth Dunkerley	1928	
	View Record	Elizabeth Delaney	1934	

The register's entry for Lilian Drewitt, below, shows her as 'living-in' at the hospital.

Student nurses were not the only ones to live onsite. At the beginning of the twentieth century many nurses and matrons still lived onsite in hospital property for their entire working lives. This slowly changed and was less likely in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Some nursing positions continue to require staff to live onsite for part, if not all, of their time – such as some defence nursing roles.

UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1898-1968 for Lilian Drewitt
Register of Nurses > 1928

REGISTRATION FOR 1928
GENERAL PART

Reg. No.	Name.	Permanent Address.	Date and Place of Registration.
29378	Drewitt, Lilian	General Infirmary, Macclesfield	Mar. 21, 1924, London
14160	Dreyer, Rosalie	Lynton Croft, Park Hill Road, Croydon, Surrey	April 20, 1923, London
10446	Drieselman, Muriel Dorothy Elizabeth	78, Claremont Road, Highgate, London, N.6	June 15, 1923, London
21537	Driffill, Norah	Cliffe, Selby, Yorkshire	Sept. 21, 1923, London
40456	Drillingcourt, Eliza	36, Newman Street, Kirk-	Nov. 20, 1925,

A search by place name can highlight links with registered overseas nurses.

The search given below for Keyword = Lagos has 176 results.









The extracts show the early years 1925-1940s, dominated by 'English names'. This possibly reflects the number of white 'expat' nurses going from the UK to the then British colony of Nigeria. Though it could be identifying Nigerian nurses with anglicised names.

The later period of the 1960s lists more African names. This probably reflects black women who came to the UK to train and register but then returned to build what was now an independent Nigeria.

For some nurses, staying on the UK registers was a matter of status, and career progression at 'home'. It was also a way to keep the door to the UK open – either for work or to return for additional training courses and to progress further up the career ladder.

Tracing Nurses

For family historians this means it is worth searching for nurses trained in Britain who returned 'home'. Not everyone was on the register; nurses did not have to be on the UK register, but it may be worth a quick search.

View Record	Mary Ann Langdon Gummow	1934	Post Master, Lagos, Nigeria, West Africa	
View Record	Rita Mary Dann	1934	Lagos, Nigeria, West Africa	
View Record	Isabel Morrison Anderson	1925	Lagos, Nigeria, West Africa	
View Record	Olusola Uddoh	1968	Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria	
View Record	Olusola Uddoh	1966	Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria	
View Record	Elizabeth Olubunmi Ibilola Modupe Subair	1968	Ebutemetta, Lagos, Nigeria	
View Record	Elizabeth Olubunmi Ibilola Modupe Subair	1966	Ebutemetta, Lagos, Nigeria	
View Record	Ayodele Adesola Sowande	1966	Lagos, Nigeria	

How to browse the registers by year

Repeat the steps that take you to the list of nursing registers. Choose the nursing register you wish to browse.

ancestry Home **Search** Message Boards Learning Center Charts and Forms New Collections

Card Catalog

Searchable listing of all record collections

Title

Keyword(s)

Search or Clear All

Filter By Collection

- Military 1
- Schools, Directories & Church Histories 4

Results 1-4 of 4

Title

- UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1898-1968
- UK & Ireland, Queen's Nursing Institute Roll of Nurses, 1891-1931
- Scotland, Nursing Applications, 1921-1945
- U.S., World War II Cadet Nursing Corps Card Files, 1942-1948

On the right-hand side there is a drop-down menu which gives a further breakdown of the types of registers available within the collection.

UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1

Search Match all terms exactly

First & Middle Name(s) **Last Name**

Lived In **Day** **Month** **Year** **Location**

Any Event

Keyword

e.g. pilot or "Flying Tigers" ▾

Day **Month** **Year**

Using the Register of Nurses as an example, if you choose that collection underneath an option to choose and browse by year will appear.

UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1

Search

Match all terms exactly

First & Middle Name(s)

Last Name

	Day	Month	Year	Location
Lived In	—	—	—	<input type="text" value="City, County, State, Couni"/>
Any Event	<input type="text" value="▼"/>	<input type="text" value="▼"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="City, County, State, Couni"/>

Keyword

e.g. pilot or "Flying Tigers" ▼

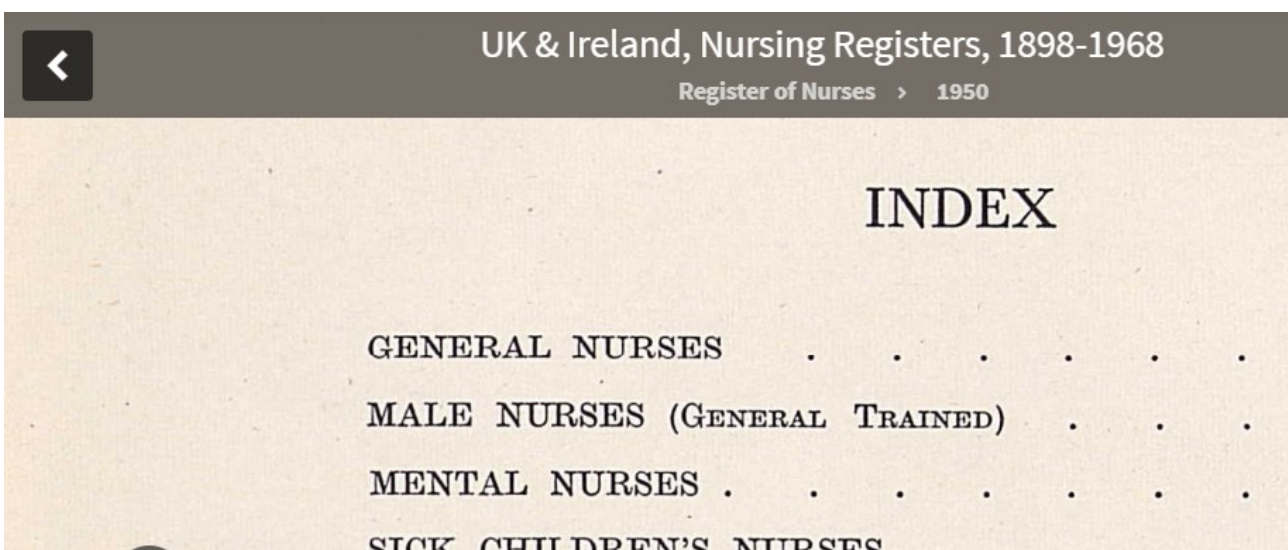
Day Month Year

Select the year you want to browse, such as 1950. It will take you to the first page, use the arrows at either side of the image, or the page number at the bottom to move through the register. As it is in alphabetical order by surname it is relatively easy to browse.



Check the contents page which usually appears in pages 1-6. This will outline what the sections are. Occasionally an appendix of General Registered Nurses appears at the end of the volume. Each section is in alphabetical order.

Although male nurses were usually listed separately for general nurses you will find men in the other sections, such as mental nurses.



Common abbreviations used in the registers

Cert = Certificated

Conj Cert = Conjointly Certificated

EN = Existing Nurse

Exp = Evidence of experience in line with the Rules. Only in the supplementary registers for Mental and Fever nurses.

FNA = Fever Nurses Association

MAB Metropolitan Asylums Board

MPA and RMPA = royal Medico-Psychological Association

NT = Nurse in training before issue of Rules

AE = After Examination (Nurse who has passed the Council's Examination)

RFN = Registered Fever Nurse

RMN = Registered Mental [Health] Nurse

RNMD = Registered Nurse for Mental Defectives (sic) [now referred to as Learning Disability Nurses]

RST = Registered Sister Tutor (holder of Certificate of Registration as a Sister Tutor)

SB of H Scottish Board of Health

SRN = State registered nurses (on the General part of the register), this included men who were state registered nurses

Tr = Trained

Reasons why you don't find your nurse on Ancestry

The most common reason is that the name on the register differs from the name you are looking for:

- Your nurse could have used a different name, such as a second name or a nickname (i.e. 'May' instead of 'Martha' or 'Nan' instead of 'Ann')
- The name was entered or indexed incorrectly on the register
- Double-barrelled names and married names often cause confusion
- Names are 'anglicised' with the spelling, or even the entire name, changed
 - The nurse could have been an SEN (State Enrolled Nurse) or a QNI nurse (Queens Nursing Institute – which is district or community nursing) or a midwife
 - Your nurse registered after 1968
 - Your nurse lived before registration was introduced in 1922
 - Your nurse appears in the register but is not indexed. Due to the size of the dataset Ancestry have not yet indexed every single year of the register. If you have an exact year when your ancestor was actively nursing, you can still look them up on the register. See the section in Appendix One on 'How to Browse the Registers by Year'
 - There is often a time lag in people appearing on the register. If you know the year of registration, but cannot find your nurse, browse the register *and* the

supplementary registers for that year. If your nurse is not listed, browse the register (and supplements) for the following year.

- During the occupation in Jersey nurses had an enforced separation from the GNC and although they continued training, they were only allowed to join again in 1946
- While the 1943 Act made it compulsory for practising nurses to register, it was not rigorously enforced; many nurses simply did not register
- Implementation of registration for SENs appear to have been only lightly implemented. Nurses employed for casual work or short contracts were unlikely to be caught if they did not register. Nurses on casual contracts would have been low paid and loath to pay the registration fee
- There was no difference in fees regardless of whether you were a fully registered nurse or a state enrolled nurse
- If the nurse only worked in wartime, then they would more likely be registered with organisations like the British Red Cross, Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS), The Territorial Force Nursing Service or Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service (QARNNS)
- Your nurse was a student nurse who subsequently did not register. Occasionally successful student nurses left nursing due to life events – such as getting married.
- Your nurse migrated. Nurses only joined the register when they had qualified and were working. Many nurses successfully trained in the UK but then moved overseas. Some nurses came to the UK specifically to train as a nurse before returning 'home'. This was particularly true for Britain's (former) colonies. Some nurses paid to stay on the register to enhance their status and their ability to find work. But many would not have applied to be on the register
- Your nurse was on a nursing register for another country. In the early and mid-twentieth century, Britain had reciprocal arrangements with a few of its colonies, recognising state registers of nursing which were agreed to be at a similar standard. These arrangements are sometimes listed at the front of the register. New Zealand was the first country in the world to maintain a state register of nurses, first collated in 1902.

Appendix Two: How to search for hospital records on nurses

The National Archives holds a database with information on the existence and location of the records of UK hospitals. There are over 2,800 entries. The dataset has not been updated since 2012 but remains a key source for identifying surviving records quickly. Go to the home page of the [Hospital Records Database](#).

guarantee its accuracy. you can search [Discovery](#) to find records held here at The National Archives

 The National Archives

Search our website

About us Education Records Information management Archives se

You are here: [Home](#) > [Search the archives](#) > Hospital Records Database

 **Hospital Records Database**
A Joint Project of the Wellcome Library & The National Archives

 **Welcome**

This database provides information on the existence and location of the records of UK hospitals. There are currently over 2,800 entries, which have been compiled by the Wellcome Library. These can be found by searching the database.

Click the option on the right-hand side to search the database.

If you know the name of the hospital, type this into 'Hospital Name', for example, Royd.

 The National Archives

About us Education Records Information management

You are here: [Home](#) > [Search the archives](#) > [Hospital Records Database](#) > Search

 **Hospital Records Database**
A Joint Project of the Wellcome Library & The National Archives

 **Search the Database**

The database may be searched by the name of a hospital, or the name of the town, or a c

Hospital name

Search for any matches on hospital name. both

Results will be listed, select 'Details' for the hospital you want to find out about, for example, Stanley Royd in Wakefield.

→ ↻ 🏠 🔒 <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/hospitalrecords/searchresults.asp>

Search results

You ran a search on **Hospital Name:** (ROYD)
The following **7** hospitals match your search. Displaying results **1 - 7**

Hospital Name	Hospital Town
Croydon General Hospital	Croydon
Glenroyd Maternity Hospital	Blackpool
High Royds Hospital	Ilkley

Alternatively, you can search for the location of the hospital you are looking for, for example, Wakefield.



- About us
- Education
- Records
- Information management

You are here: [Home](#) > [Search the archives](#) > [Hospital Records Database](#) > Search



Hospital Records Database
A Joint Project of the Wellcome Library & The National Archives

Search the Database

The database may be searched by the name of a hospital, or the name of the town, or a

Hospital name

Search for any matches on hospital name, both

The Search for Wakefield gives 11 results, select 'Details' for the hospital you want to find out about, for example, Stanley Royd in Wakefield.

Hospital Name	Hospital Town
Cardigan Sanatorium	Wakefield
Carr Gate Hospital	Wakefield
Clayton Hospital	Wakefield
Convalescent Home and Guild of Pity	Wakefield
Manygates Maternity Hospital	Wakefield
Snapethorpe Hospital	Wakefield

Cardigan Sanatorium	Wakefield
Carr Gate Hospital	Wakefield
Clayton Hospital	Wakefield
Convalescent Home and Guild of Pity	Wakefield
Manygates Maternity Hospital	Wakefield
Snapethorpe Hospital	Wakefield

Each entry has five sections: Name, Administration, Status/Type and Records, scroll down the web page to read the details for each section:



Hospital Records Database

A Joint Project of the Wellcome Library & The National Archives

Details: Stanley Royd Hospital, Wakefield

Go to: [Name](#) | [Administration](#) | [Status/Type](#) | [Other info](#) | [Records](#)

Name

Present name	Stanley Royd Hospital
Previous name(s)	West Riding Asylum (1818 - 1824) West Riding Mental Hospital (1825 - 1948)
Address	Aberford Road Wakefield WF1 4DQ

Name: The alternate names are useful as people often refer to a hospital by its previous name, so you may have heard that your nurse worked at the Asylum long after it had been renamed. A significant number of nurses would have registered whilst it was known as West Riding Mental Hospital. The address and the opening/closing dates are all helpful for understanding where your ancestor may have worked.

Administrative authorities		? Help : Ad
Regional Hospital Board (1948-74)	Leeds	
Hospital Management Committee (1948-74)	Wakefield (B)	
Regional Health Authority (1974-82)	Yorkshire	
Regional Health Authority (1982-)	Yorkshire	
District Health Authority (1974-82)	Western (Wakefield)	
District Health Authority (1982-)	Wakefield	
Current Trust	Wakefield and Pontefract C	

Understanding the administrative authorities helps research. Hospital administration records, such as annual reports or financial records, may have been retained as part of the 'parent' archives. It's useful to see who the Hospital reported to and the changes of name.

Status		Type	
	? Help : Status		? Help : Type
Pre 1948	Local Authority	Pre 1948	Mental
Post 1948	NHS	Post 1948	Mental

Even now, not all UK hospitals are NHS hospitals. It's useful to understand what sort of hospital it was, especially as it will tell you more about what type of nurse your ancestor was.

Records can be found at:

(i) West Yorkshire Archive Service, Wakefield Headquarters

Record type	Date range	Finding aids
Administrative	1814 - 1960	Finding aids
General	1814 - 1960	Location of finding aids
Admission & Discharge	1814 - 1951	Details C85, C85 addi
Ephemera	1820 - 1875	

An overview of records is then given. This is very summary – it may list nursing registers, or character books. Your next step is to look at details of the archive service and look at their online catalogues.

Click on the (i) to the left of the named archive service for more information. This step takes you out of the Hospital Records Database

The last step took you into The National Archives Directory of Record Offices. This can be searched as a standalone resource; you can search for the name of a record office or for the place name where it is based.

Using the (i) link from the Hospital Records Database, it gives you contact details for the record office for your hospital, in this case the West Yorkshire Archive Service (WYAS) which holds the Stanley Royd Hospital Records.

are doing this.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
Menu
▼

[Home](#) > [Discovery](#) > West Yorkshire Archive Service, Wakefield

West Yorkshire Archive Service, Wakefield

West Yorkshire History Centre
127 Kirkgate
Wakefield
England
WF1 1JG

[View on map](#)

Open: Monday-Friday 9.30-5; 2nd

- Book in advance
- Wheelchair access
- Research Service
- Readers ticket required

[Visit website](#)

Most record offices will have an online catalogue. Since the Hospital Record Database was last updated in 2012, individual record offices have made significant progress in adding to their online catalogues. Catalogues may give you more information about what records survive.

Before contacting the record office have a look at their website and any catalogues or research guides to see if you can find out more.

The National Archives Directory usually includes a website link for the record office. This link takes you away from The National Archives website.

Appendix Three: What to expect from a record office

Most Record Offices will have a website which, like [West Yorkshire Archive Service \(WYAS\)](#) include:

- an online catalogue
- guides to collections (these usually include a family history guide)
- contact us
- opening hours / how to arrange a visit
- events and sometimes exhibitions
- details of social media.

Following our example of Stanley Royd Hospital, WYAS has a useful Family History Guide which includes a short section on hospital staff records.

WYAS, also have a guide to accessing Mental Health Records – as Stanley Royd was a mental health hospital, it is useful to look at this guide.

The guides include useful information to help you understand the restrictions that may be placed on records that you would like to access.

It is likely that you will need to arrange a visit to the record office and physically view relevant items, so doing some research before you visit is vital.



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[Home](#) > [West Yorkshire Archive Service](#) > [Our collections](#) > [Collection Guides](#)



Our collections

- | [Search our Catalogue](#)
- | [Our Collections Online](#)
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- | [Bradford Collections](#)
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- | [Kirklees Collections](#)

Collection Guides

- [Collections Guide 1 - parish registers](#)
- [Collections Guide 2 - Nonconformist records](#)
- [Collections Guide 3 - Bishops Transcripts](#)
- [Collections Guide 4 - Wills](#)
- [Collections Guide 5 - Roman Catholic Registers](#)
- [Collections Guide 6 - Police Records](#)

Searching a Record Office catalogue

It is highly unlikely that your nurse is individually named in the online catalogue, or that the records have been digitised and made available to search online. It is always worth searching for your individual nurse's name but be prepared to be disappointed.

Records that may contain your nurse's name and additional details are more likely to be in physical records; these records may not include the word nurse in the catalogue description. So, what records should you be looking for? Stanley Royd Hospital Records at WYAS is a typical example. Records that could be useful include:

- staff service registers
- staff wages and salaries
- photographs and newspaper articles
- hospital magazine
- service register – salaries.

Records that helpfully include the word nurse or matron include the following, (i.e. be aware of the sources listed above or you may miss out on key sources for your ancestor):

- student nurses prize-givings
- assistant matron's or night superintendent's report book
- nurses' resignation registers.

Records, such as the salary registers, change names over time. Check the dates to see if any relevant records survive for your nursing ancestor. For example, the file 'Nursing Resignation No 4' covers the dates Aug 1928-Mar 1936. The catalogue tells you that it is indexed. This is a physical index which is probably at the front or the back of the volume. Registers with indexes will save you time when physically checking for your nurse and help you manage your time when you visit the record office. Records without indexes, or which are not in alphabetical order by surname, will take you longer to look through.



A A A | Text only

Home	Advanced Search > Search Results > Record > Record										
Advanced Search	As well as the full description of your search result this page will provide information on the Catalogue Finding Number which you will need to quote if you wish to look at										
People	Click on the 'Level' field information to view the result within its full collection										
Places	<input type="checkbox"/> C000085 - STANLEY ROYD HOSPITAL, WAKEFIELD (FORMERLY THE WEST RIDING HOSPITAL) <input type="checkbox"/> 10 - Wakefield Stanley Royd Hospital Records [additional records WYAS956]										
Image Gallery											
About the catalogue	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Catalogue Finding Number</td> <td>C85/[WYAS956]/outsized</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Office record is held at</td> <td>Wakefield, West Yorkshire Archive Service</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Title</td> <td>Nurses' resignation register no 4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Description</td> <td>Indexed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Date</td> <td>Aug 1928-Mar 1936</td> </tr> </table>	Catalogue Finding Number	C85/[WYAS956]/outsized	Office record is held at	Wakefield, West Yorkshire Archive Service	Title	Nurses' resignation register no 4	Description	Indexed	Date	Aug 1928-Mar 1936
Catalogue Finding Number	C85/[WYAS956]/outsized										
Office record is held at	Wakefield, West Yorkshire Archive Service										
Title	Nurses' resignation register no 4										
Description	Indexed										
Date	Aug 1928-Mar 1936										
FAQs											
Useful links											
▼ Help											

When you have looked through the online catalogue and guides you may have identified some records you think could be useful. You will have questions. Catalogues can be confusing, and you may not know where to start. Becoming more familiar with the catalogues and guides may help answer your questions or will at least help you open up a conversation with the record office.

At this point, contact the record office so that they can help.

When asking for help you may find it best to write an email. Focus on what records you want to look at and what you are hoping to find. Do tell them that you are looking for a nurse, give the name, dates, and how you think your nurse had a connection (were they a student at the hospital, did they work there, or was it the nearest hospital to where they lived?). Ask the archivist whether the records you have identified are likely to help your research, or if they have any advice.

The archivist will want to help and should be able to point you at relevant records if any survive. Sometimes no records will survive for the dates your nurse was active.

There are some practical restrictions that you may not be familiar with that the record office team will need to work within:

- Some staff records will be closed – the record office will be complying with legislation that protects personal data (GDPR/DPA)
- Some record offices have limited opening hours, or limited spaces for researchers
- Record offices will need time to retrieve the records you wish to research in time for your visit, hence booking in advance
- Most record offices will request a form of identification from you – their collections are unique and they are obliged to protect them
- Record offices will have ‘rules’, most commonly to leave bags outside the reading room, to use a pencil or laptop, not to eat or drink.

Have a look on the website to find out how the record office works, and if you have any questions ask the archive team. Record Offices are very proud of the records they hold and are keen for researchers to access them.

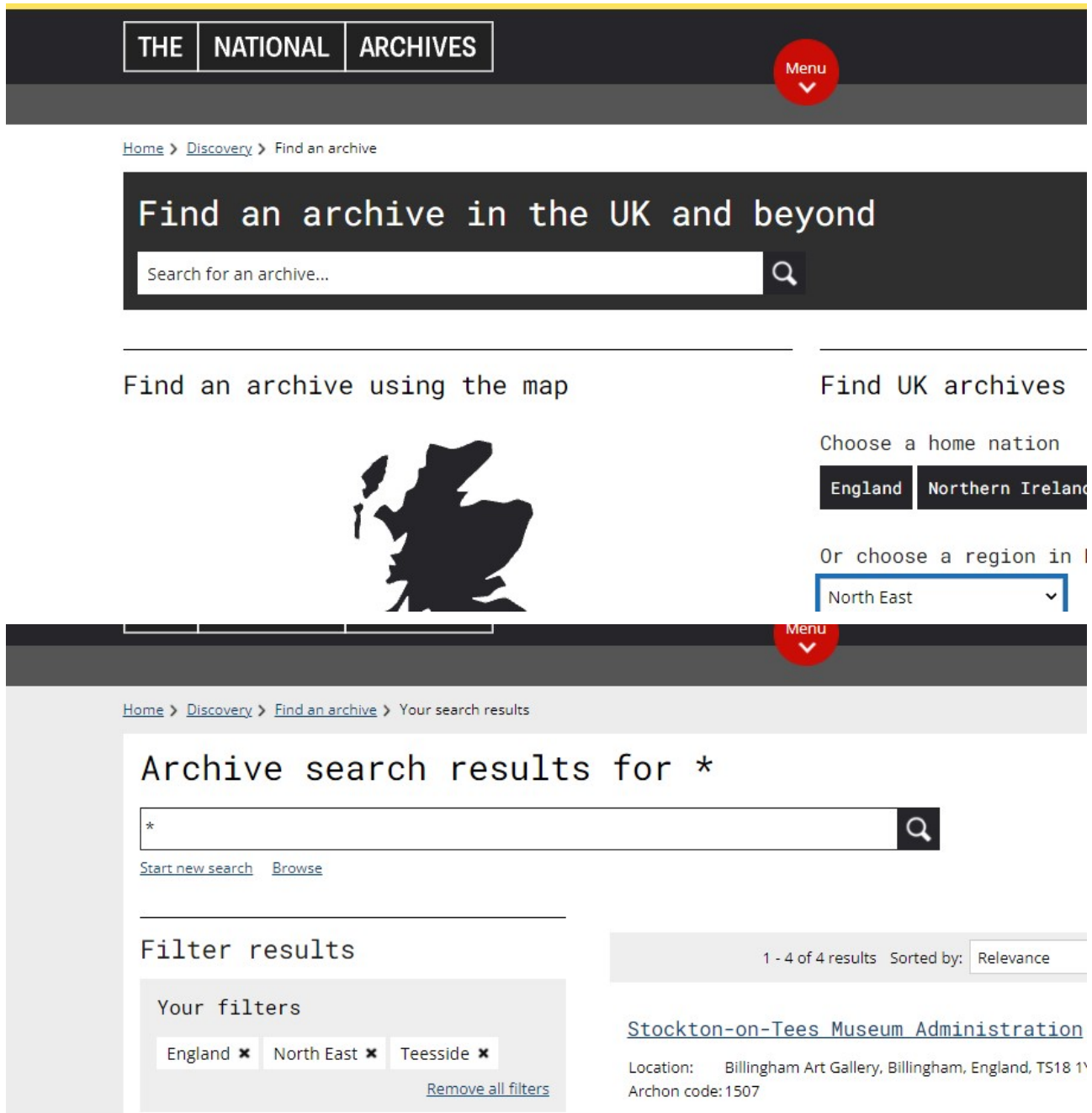
You can find out more about the work of the record office by following them on social media – most now have accounts on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. This may help you discover the range of services they provide.

Record Office websites will often have links to local (family) history groups or talks and events which you may find useful.

Appendix Four: How to find a record office in the UK

The National Archives has a Directory that enables you to [Find an Archive Office](#).

This has options for you to browse or search by location. For example if you choose North East, and then Teesside you will be able to browse the record offices in that location.



The screenshot shows the National Archives website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES' and a 'Menu' button. Below this is a breadcrumb trail: 'Home > Discovery > Find an archive'. The main heading is 'Find an archive in the UK and beyond' with a search input field containing 'Search for an archive...'. Below the search bar, there are two columns of options. The left column is titled 'Find an archive using the map' and features a silhouette of the United Kingdom. The right column is titled 'Find UK archives' and includes a 'Choose a home nation' section with buttons for 'England' and 'Northern Ireland'. Below that is an 'Or choose a region in' section with a dropdown menu set to 'North East'. A second 'Menu' button is visible on the right side of the page. The bottom section shows search results for an asterisk (*). It includes a search bar with the asterisk, a 'Start new search' link, and a 'Browse' link. The results are filtered by 'England', 'North East', and 'Teesside', with a 'Remove all filters' link. The results list '1 - 4 of 4 results' sorted by 'Relevance'. The first result is 'Stockton-on-Tees Museum Administration' with location details: 'Location: Billingham Art Gallery, Billingham, England, TS18 1' and 'Archon code: 1507'.

It allows you to search by organisation name. If an organisation maintains its own archive it will be listed here.

For example, type 'Unilever' into the search box.



[Home](#) > [Discovery](#) > [Find an archive](#)

Find an archive in the UK and beyond



Find an archive using the map



Find UK archives

Choose a home nation

Or choose a region in I



[Home](#) > [Discovery](#) > [Find an archive](#) > Your search results


Archive search results for Unilever



[Start new search](#)

[Browse](#)

Filter results

Location of archive 

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Unilever Archives and Records Manaqeme

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Unilever Archives and Records Management

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Email: archives@unilever.com

Open: Monday-Friday 10-4 by app

Closed: Bank and public holidays

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- Proof of identity required

Some organisations, like Unilever, hold a surprising number of records related to nursing, either because they employed (factory) nurses or because they made products for nurses who appeared in promotional material.

However most archives that survive will be held in local record offices, so it's best to start your research there, before delving into more specialist archives.