

# NURSING HISTORY NOW

SPRING | SUMMER 2020



Nurse and activist Avis Hutt speaks to Chinese workers during a six-week peace mission to the country in 1955 with the Communist Party of Great Britain. Read more about her life and work on page 15 (Image credit: the estate of Avis Hutt)

## A new beginning

In January, the forum welcomed Stuart Wildman as its new steering committee chair. You can find full details of the new committee online. Visit [rcn.org.uk/forums](https://rcn.org.uk/forums)

We now have around 2,000 forum members, while our local groups in Chester, Belfast and London are all engaged in a range of projects and activities (although some are currently on hold). To find out more about the forum, visit the web page at [rcn.org.uk/forums](https://rcn.org.uk/forums) or contact Stuart at [honf@rcn.org.uk](mailto:honf@rcn.org.uk)

# Editor's letter

Welcome to the spring/summer 2020 issue of *Nursing History Now*

For more than three years, preparations have been taking place to celebrate the bicentenary of Florence Nightingale's birth on 12 May 2020. Who could have imagined that we'd be in the midst of a pandemic, causing many of those events to be cancelled or postponed? Nevertheless, we can still find time to reflect on Nightingale's legacy. On page 10, read about the Florence Nightingale Museum's exhibition featuring objects loaned by the RCN.

I have recently been re-reading Nightingale's *Notes on Nursing*, written before much was known of pathogenic organisms and their transmission, and was struck by parallels with the COVID-19 pandemic. Nightingale believed "stagnant, musty, corrupt air would breed disease" but that without cleanliness, ventilation was useless. She advised that "every nurse... wash her hands very frequently".

Nightingale spent many years at home, in poor health and cut off from her family. She was however a prolific writer of letters, books, pamphlets, reports and was often consulted in her white and airy room, but only ever by one person at a time.

This issue, we look at the lives of other remarkable nurses. Kate Marsden (pages 6-7) who cared for people with leprosy in Siberia, peace activist Avis Hutt (page 15) and the first men on the general state register (pages 8-9).

We hope you enjoy this issue, and perhaps use this time at home or on the frontline of nursing to reflect that now, more than ever, we are all part of history.

Dianne Yarwood, Editor



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STORY  
TO  
TELL?

We're always keen to hear of your thoughts and research related to nursing history. Send your ideas for stories and items for inclusion in future issues of *Nursing History Now* to our editor Dianne Yarwood at [d.yarwood@nthworld.com](mailto:d.yarwood@nthworld.com)

Front cover: An etching of Florence Nightingale, whose bicentenary is on 12 May 2020

# History in the making

## Mental health nursing research

**D**id you work or train as a nurse at Hill End, Napsbury or Shenley Hospital between 1930 and 1959? If so, Justin Stephens, mental health nurse and senior lecturer for Nursing at the University of Greenwich, would like to hear from you. Justin is currently completing a PhD investigating changes in the theory and practice of mental health nursing in the mid-20th century and is looking for nurses who worked at these Hertfordshire hospitals to share their experiences.

- Email [justin.stephens@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:justin.stephens@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk) or call 07932 068 512 leaving your name and contact details.



Napsbury Military Hospital, 1916  
(Image credit: State Library of Queensland)

## Research funding available now

**T**he RCN Foundation is funding two awards, up to the value of £5,000, for research on the history of nursing and midwifery. Previously known as the Monica Baly Bursary, the awards are being made as part of the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife celebrations. Applications are particularly welcomed where there are gaps in historical research, or in practice areas where history is not as well documented. Registered nurses, midwives and students must apply by 5pm on 29 May.

- Email [grants@rcnfoundation.org.uk](mailto:grants@rcnfoundation.org.uk) for an application form or visit [rcnfoundation.rcn.org.uk](http://rcnfoundation.rcn.org.uk) for more information.

## Nursing biographies added to dictionary



**T**he 60th update of the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB) launched in February 2020 and includes the lives of 20 outstanding figures from nursing, including six from the founding generation of the College of Nursing. Many of the new nursing biographies were compiled by members of the History of Nursing Forum and coordinated by Teresa Doherty.

“Two hundred years after Florence Nightingale’s birth, both researchers and the public recognise only a small number of nurses in history,” Teresa said. “A wave of anniversaries including the centenaries of the RCN and of nurse registration, and 70 years of the NHS, have highlighted the numbers of outstanding individuals who should be known. This update illustrates how inspiring these professionals are.”

The new biographies include RCN founding member Rachael Cox-Davies, Scottish nurse Annie Gill (picture above) who served in the Boer War, and champion of district nursing Christina McKay.

- Anyone with a public library card can create an account and many universities and colleges offer access for their students. Find the ODNB online at [oxforddnb.com](http://oxforddnb.com)
- Look out for an exploration of these new nursing biographies in the next issue of *Nursing History Now*.

## Meet the Chair

**D**r Stuart Wildman joined the History of Nursing Forum steering committee in January, taking on the role of Forum Chair. Stuart is a retired nurse and lecturer, who worked in the NHS and higher education for more than 38 years, almost exclusively in the West Midlands. Having completed his PhD in the history of nursing in 2012, Stuart is currently an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham.

He is actively engaged in research into hospital and community nursing in the 19th and 20th centuries.

- Turn to page 8 to read Stuart's article about the first men on the general register.



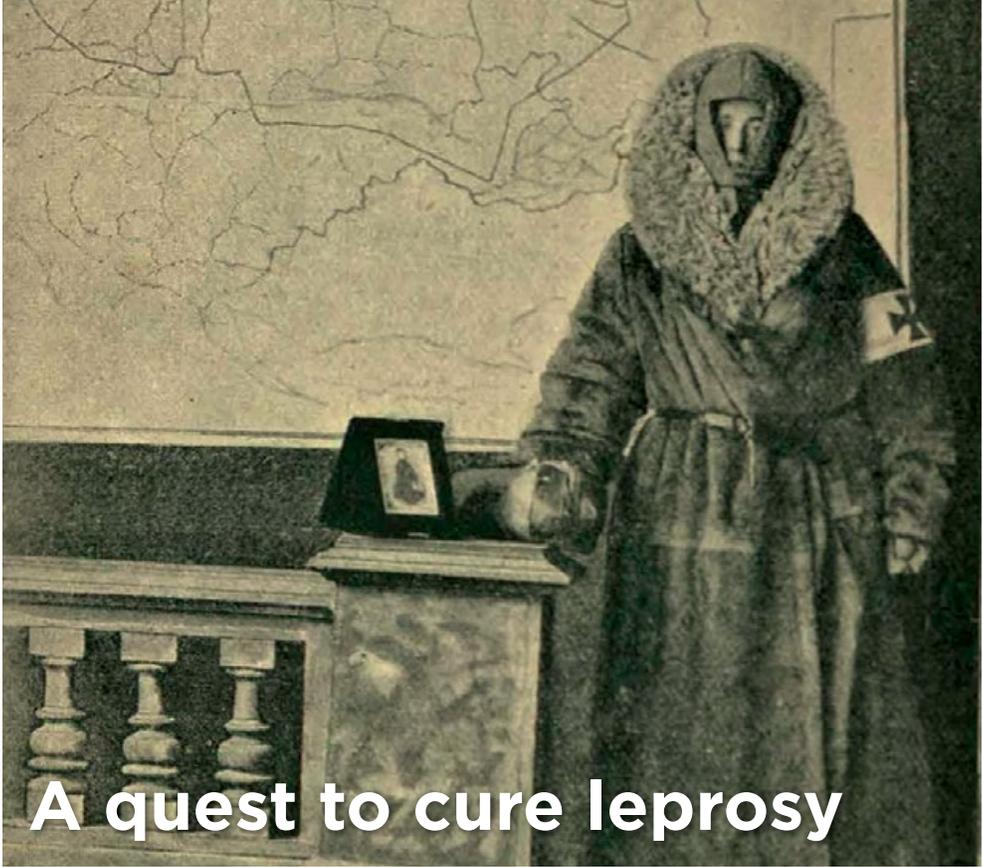
## Links for lockdown

**A**lthough many exhibitions are now closed and events cancelled, you can find your fill of nursing history online.

- On the UK Association for the History of Nursing website you can read past issues of their journal *Bulletin*, covering topics such as the lives of nurses in India under British rule, Glasgow's interwar paediatric nurses, and featuring interesting biographies. Visit [ukahn.org](http://ukahn.org) or email Claire Chatterton ([c.s.chatterton@open.ac.uk](mailto:c.s.chatterton@open.ac.uk)) for more information.
- Across the Atlantic, the American Association for the History of Nursing also has a website hosting past issues of its own *Bulletin* from 2008 to 2018. Find copies of the journal at [aahn.org/bulletin](http://aahn.org/bulletin) or email Claire Chatterton.
- You can still enjoy the RCN's exhibitions online. Explore this pertinent piece on the history of nursing in pandemics, including Spanish Flu and the Ebola outbreak, at [rcn.org.uk/pandemic](http://rcn.org.uk/pandemic)



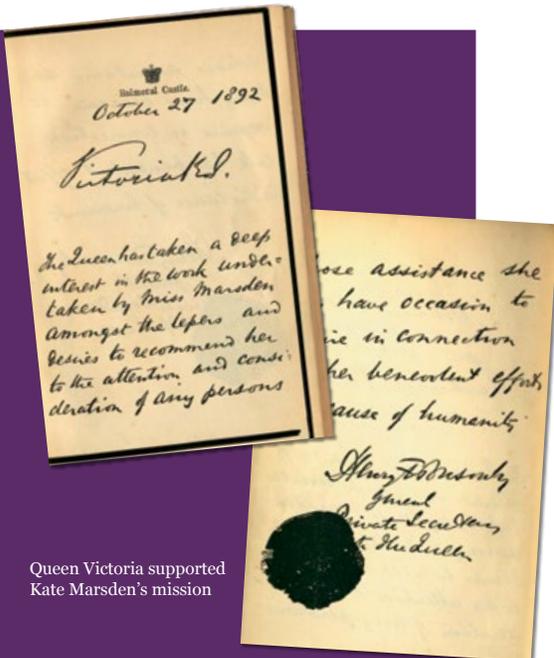
Photos, posters and artefacts from Pandemic! Nursing 100 Years of Infection



Kate Marsden, dressed in furs, stands in front of a map of Siberia (Image credit: On Sledge and Horseback to Outcast Siberian Lepers)

# A quest to cure leprosy

Gosia Brykczynska, retired nursing lecturer and Chair of the London group of the RCN History of Nursing Forum, explores the lasting legacy of nurse Kate Marsden's leprosy quest to Yakutia



Queen Victoria supported Kate Marsden's mission

**K**ate Marsden was born in Edmonton, London in 1859. Yet it was in the distant Siberian province of Yakutia where she made a lasting impact as an innovative and compassionate nurse.

Soon after her training in Tottenham, London, Marsden volunteered as a Red Cross nurse in Bulgaria during the Russian-Turkish war, looking after Russian soldiers. It was here that she first encountered people suffering from leprosy. She later wrote in her memoir: "Surely these, of all afflicted people, ought to become the object of my mission."

Marsden learned there was a herb that could cure the disease – but it grew only in Siberia. She was determined to find it.

Her career continued as a matron in New Zealand and elsewhere, but by 1890 she found herself in Russia to receive an award for her Red Cross work. Determined to find the cure

for leprosy, she met with the Empress of Russia and secured her support. She also sought funds in continental Europe and the USA, and received the backing of Queen Victoria.

In 1891, after an 11,000-mile journey, Marsden finally reached the people afflicted with leprosy in Yakutia, Siberia. Unfortunately, the fabled herb did not have the power to treat leprosy, but Marsden did set up a hospice and treatment centre.

Marsden published an account of her expedition, *On Sledge and Horseback to Outcast Siberian Lepers* in 1893. Her Siberian mission saw her elected one of the first women fellows of the Royal Geographical Society.

Back in England, she faced many obstacles and much criticism for her feisty temperament, rumours about her sexuality, and antipathy towards Catholicism. She had converted to Catholicism and helped set up St Francis Leprosy Guild in 1895, to care for leprosy patients around the world. This association still exists and over the past 125 years has cared

for hundreds of thousands of leprosy patients. Marsden stepped down from this work soon afterwards and went to live with friends. She died in poverty in 1931, largely forgotten.

However, the people of Yakutia did not forget her. They have expressed their gratitude for her work by naming a medical school and a square after her, erecting a statue and printing her picture on stamps.

Last year, the people of Yakutia arranged to have a new memorial stone blessed and put on her grave in Hillingdon, West London. A group of Russian Orthodox worshippers from Yakutia with their bishop, Russian consulate officials, local English dignitaries, representatives from the leprosy guild, and Heather Bond representing the RCN History of Nursing Forum, gathered at Marsden's graveside. The moving event brought home the irony that Marsden, who led such a rich life and touched so many individuals, died in obscurity. Her memory lives on in Yakutia, over 4,000 miles from where she now lies at rest. ■

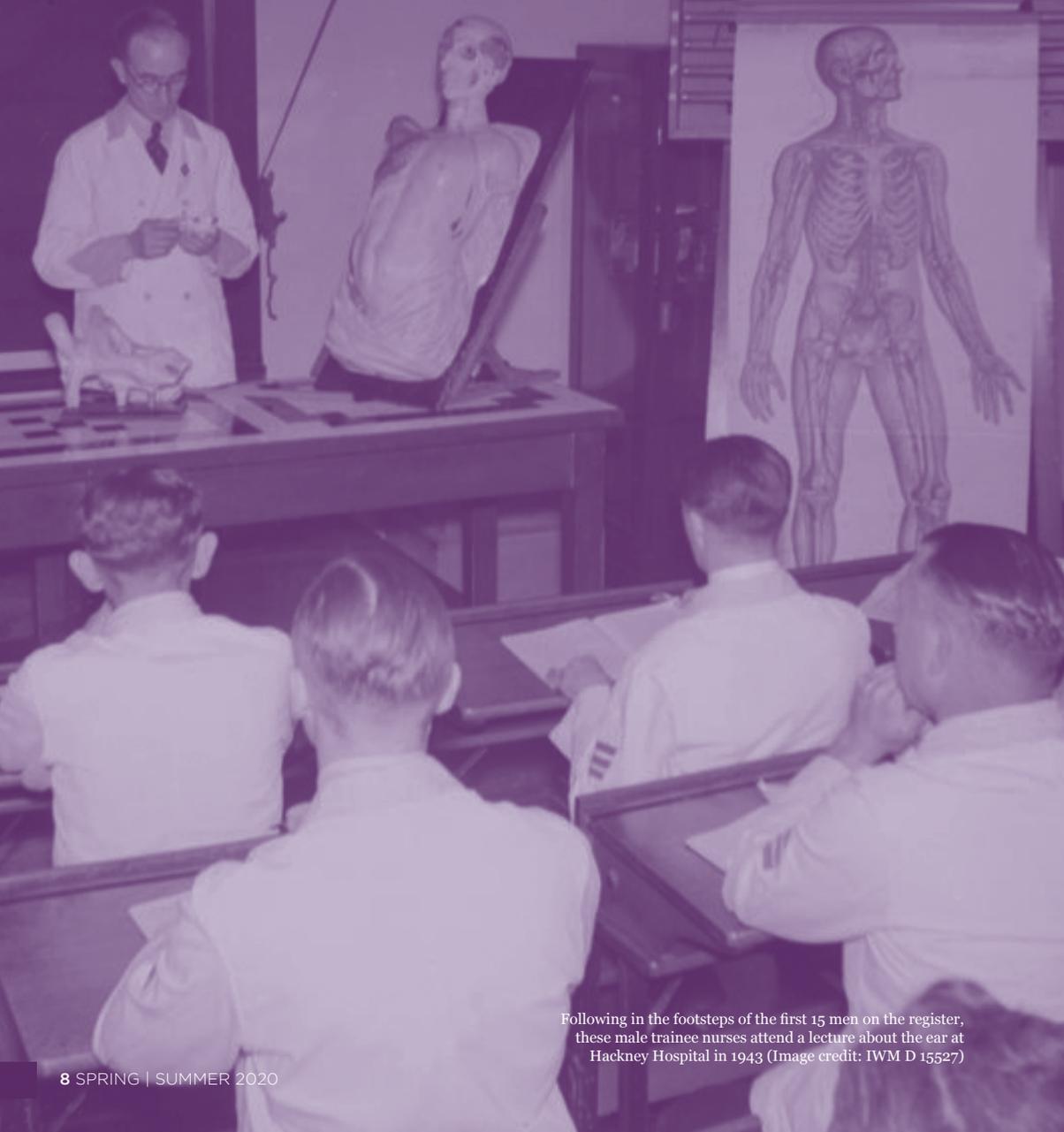


#### FIND OUT MORE

- Read the full story in Kate Marsden's own words in *On Sledge and Horseback to Outcast Siberian Lepers* (available to download on Kindle).
- A documentary film of Marsden's life is currently in production – look out for future announcements about its release.

# 15 good men

Who were the first men on the general nursing register? Dr Stuart Wildman, Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham and Chair of the History of Nursing Forum, finds out



Following in the footsteps of the first 15 men on the register, these male trainee nurses attend a lecture about the ear at Hackney Hospital in 1943 (Image credit: IWM D 15527)

Following the Nurses' Registration Act of 1919, the General Nursing Council for England and Wales published its first register in September 1922. There was a general register, reserved for women, and supplementary parts for male, mental (male and female), children's and fever nurses. The existence of a supplementary register for male nurses was surprisingly uncontroversial given that many nursing reformers had set out to create an occupation exclusively for women. In 1898 Ethel Gordon Fenwick, the leading campaigner for nurse registration, told a conference of matrons that if the public wanted trained male nurses they would have them. Indeed, there was high demand for suitably trained men to care for male patients with physical illnesses.

The first register contained the names of 15 men and a further nine were added before the end of 1922. Nearly 10,000 female general nurses registered at the same time. The first male state registered nurse (SRN) was George Dunn of Liverpool who, like 19 other men in this first cohort, had trained in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC). Of these, two had been trained in hospitals in India and one in Malta. The four civilian nurses were all trained at the Hackney Union Infirmary in London.

Altogether, 11 of these nurses had military experience in World War One (WW1) and at least one (Harold Whitcombe, SRN 22) served in the Boer War as well. Three were also on the mental part of the register – including George Essex (SRN 2), who later became Chief Male Nurse at Herrison Mental Hospital in Dorset. Seven men were working in prisons at the point of registration, three in the Hackney Union Infirmary, one for the Male Nurses Temperance Cooperative (an agency for private

nurses), and Walter Clark (SRN 13) was working in Perth, Australia.

It is difficult to follow the careers of all these men. After registration most continued as nurses but some did not. Edward Bryant (SRN 10) had an illustrious career in the RAMC serving in Egypt, France and on hospital ships during WW1, and rose to the position of acting Sergeant Major. In 1939 he was still on the register, but working as a station officer for the London Fire Brigade. One of the youngest men on the register was Frederick Stratton (SRN 6), who like his brother, trained in the Hackney Infirmary. He started training in 1914 but was drafted

into the army and did not qualify until 1920. In 1923 he was elected unopposed to the General Nursing Council and represented male nurses on the supplementary register until 1932.

By the beginning of World War Two there were 528 men registered, less than 0.5% of all general nurses. Roughly an equal amount came from civilian hospitals and the armed services. In addition to the army, navy and prison service,

approved training schools increased to about 10 by 1940, then 90 by 1947, but the number of men registering remained low.

Representatives of male nurses argued for the amalgamation of both parts of the general register in 1943, drawing criticism from their female counterparts. Before long, however, the 1949 Nurses Act abolished the supplementary register. Male general nurses joined the general register alongside their female colleagues. Yet the perception of nursing as a women's profession seems to have remained. In the early 1950s, approximately 7% of general nurses were male. Today, nearly 70 years later, only 11% of all nurses are men. ■

Reg. No.	Name.	Permanent Address.	Date and Place of Registration.	Qualifications.
9	Barrett, George	63, Buckingham Gate, London, S.W.1	May 19, 1922, London	Tr. 1903-1906, Camb. Hosp., Aldershot, R.A.M.C. Cert. 1908-1911, Royal Victoria Hosp., Netley, R.A.M.C.
10	Bryant, Edward Charles	72, Verdant Lane, Catford, London, S.E.5	May 19, 1922, London	Cert. 1909-1912, Military Hosp., Coltonera, Malta, R.A.M.C.
13	Clark, Walter George William	c/o G. Ayton, Esq., 58 Jersey Street, Jallamont, Subisco, near Perth, Western Australia	July 21, 1922, London	Cert. 1918-1921, Hackney Union Infy., London
14	Dowty, Edwin George	Hackney Union Infy., High Street, Homerton, London, E.9	July 21, 1922, London	Cert. 1901-1904, R.A.M.C. Hosps.
1	Duan, George	8, Classic Road, Derby Lane, Stoneycroft, Liverpool	Mar. 17, 1922, London	Tr. 1914-1917, R.A.M.C. Hosps.
2	Essex, George	Herrison, nr. Dorchester, Dorset	Mar. 17, 1922, London	Tr. 1912-1915, R.A.M.C. Hosps.
11	Green, William James	a Block, 6 Quarters, H.M. Prison, Parkhurst, Isle of Wight	June 26, 1922, London	Tr. 1901-1903, Royal Victoria Hosp., Netley, R.A.M.C.
12	Greenwood, John	555, Caledonian Road, Halloway, London, N.7	June 26, 1922, London	Tr. 1892-1910, R.A.M.C. Hosps.
3	Noakes, George	20, Seafield Road, Hove, Sussex	Mar. 17, 1922, London	Cert. 1898-1901, Station Hosp., Rawal Pindi, India, R.A.M.C.
4	Raggett, Herbert	21, Quarters, H.M. Prison, Durham	Mar. 17, 1922, London	Cert. 1917-1920, Hackney Union Infy., London
5	Riekson, Charles Walton	13, The Avenue, Britton Hill, London, S.W.2	Mar. 17, 1922, London	Cert. 1918-1915, Hackney Union Infy., London
6	Stratton, Frederick William	Hackney Union Infirmary, 230, High St., Homerton, London, E.9	Mar. 17, 1922, London	Cert. 1922-1925, Military Hosp., Tidmouth, R.A.M.C.
15	Stratton, Henry George	157, High Street, Homerton, London, E.9	July 21, 1922, London	Tr. 1894-1902, R.A.M.C. Hosps.
7	Wadham, Charles Thomas Henry	7, Fitzley Street, Barrett Road, London, E.14	Mar. 17, 1922, London	
8	White, Walter	16, Camp Hill, Parkhurst, Isle of Wight	Mar. 17, 1922, London	



# Celebrating Florence Nightingale

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David Green, Director of the Florence Nightingale Museum, explains why he and his colleagues are going the extra mile to celebrate 200 years since the birth of Britain's most famous nurse

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The Florence Nightingale Museum's bicentenary exhibition features artefacts including the iconic lamp  
(Image credit: The Florence Nightingale Museum)

**Y**ou're probably aware by now that 2020 is the bicentenary of Florence Nightingale's birth. On 12 May, it will be 200 years since the mother of modern nursing was born in Florence, while her parents were travelling through Europe. With this milestone in mind, we at the Florence Nightingale Museum have been working hard for the past two years, planning ways to celebrate and share Nightingale's inspiring story with wider audiences. Although the COVID-19 pandemic means some events have been cancelled, it's still been a great opportunity to reflect on Nightingale's legacy and to work with nursing, statistical and heritage organisations throughout the world, including the RCN, meeting many new friends along the way!

Our temporary exhibition, Florence Nightingale in 200 Objects, People and Places opened to the public on Sunday 8 March 2020 – International Women's Day. We felt this was a fitting opportunity to highlight Nightingale as a genuine pioneer, who was an iconic woman in her own lifetime and has truly inspired generations of women (and men) ever since.

We asked people to nominate objects and modern-day nurses, both from the UK and abroad, to highlight that her spirit lives on. Some were even selected by RCN student members.

The immersive exhibition begins in Nightingale's bedroom in South Street London,

and contains objects from our own collection stores, as well as exhibits from the RCN Archives, the National Army Museum, the World Museum Liverpool and the collections of individuals. Visitors had the chance to hear a voice recording made by Nightingale in 1890. It provides a reflection point, before the story moves on to explore Nightingale's influence upon the world – from her contributions to statistical research and hygiene, to her compassion in being one of the first nursing leaders to insist that wives of soldiers killed in battle should be notified.

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“ Nightingale wanted to make nursing a profession where women earned a proper wage, were respected and had recognised skills

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Meanwhile, the family corner showed off nursing careers via the stories of the team at St Thomas's. There was a chance to dress up and follow a trail around the museum to see some of our most popular exhibits: Nightingale's beloved owl Athena and the famous lamp from Scutari Hospital. While the lamp is a favourite, many are still surprised when they see what it looks like! ▶



A recreation of Nightingale's bedroom, where she spent much time during her illnesses (Image credit: The Florence Nightingale Museum)

The exhibition also reveals the challenges Nightingale had to overcome to become a nurse. She wanted to make nursing a profession where women earned a proper wage, were respected and had recognised skills. She's often dismissed too easily because of her privileged background, but to me this is what makes her work so amazing, because she could quite easily have been sitting in luxury. There's a great bit in one of her letters where she says she'd combed her hair for the first time, because she was used to having a maid do it, yet to go from that to rat-infested squalor, and with the sea-sickness she suffered on the way to Scutari, Crimea – that takes guts.

If you didn't manage to visit in person when the museum was open, then a visit to our website ([florence-nightingale.co.uk/200exhibits](http://florence-nightingale.co.uk/200exhibits)) is the next best thing. Here, you will also find updates on our wider events programme.

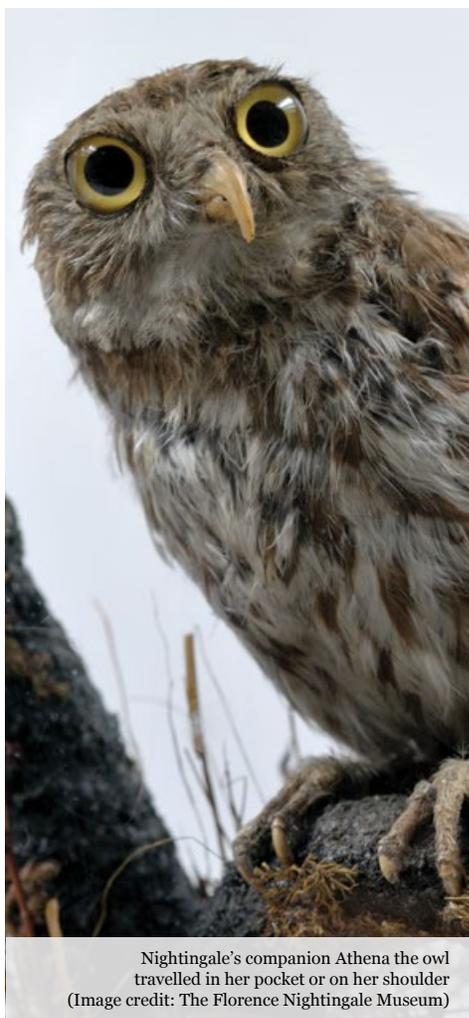
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“ She was one of the first nursing leaders to insist that wives of soldiers killed in battle should be notified

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Although most things are postponed right now, earlier in the year we are proud to have supported the Burdett Trust for Nursing to create a Nightingale-themed show garden which would have been shown at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May. The design of the restorative space, draws inspiration directly from our collections. We're also involved with a special Nightingale Evensong at St Paul's Cathedral on 27 October, and the museum team will attend the Lord Mayor's Show on 8 November with a giant lamp and 38 nurses, representing those who accompanied Nightingale to Scutari.

With many people asking about bicentenary keepsakes, we've developed a range of exclusive 2020 merchandise. We're also proud to see Mattel's new Nightingale Barbie, which they developed with our support and advice for their Inspiring Women series. These will be



collectibles and it says much of Nightingale's influence that she has been selected to sit within this group.

It is a huge honour for us to be working on such celebratory projects and if you would like to get involved, you can! We're launching a new volunteering programme this year, when we reopen, and are always looking for project partners. ■

## Find out more

- Explore the virtual exhibition or help the museum survive lockdown by purchasing souvenirs and tickets for future exhibitions, at [florence-nightingale.co.uk](http://florence-nightingale.co.uk)

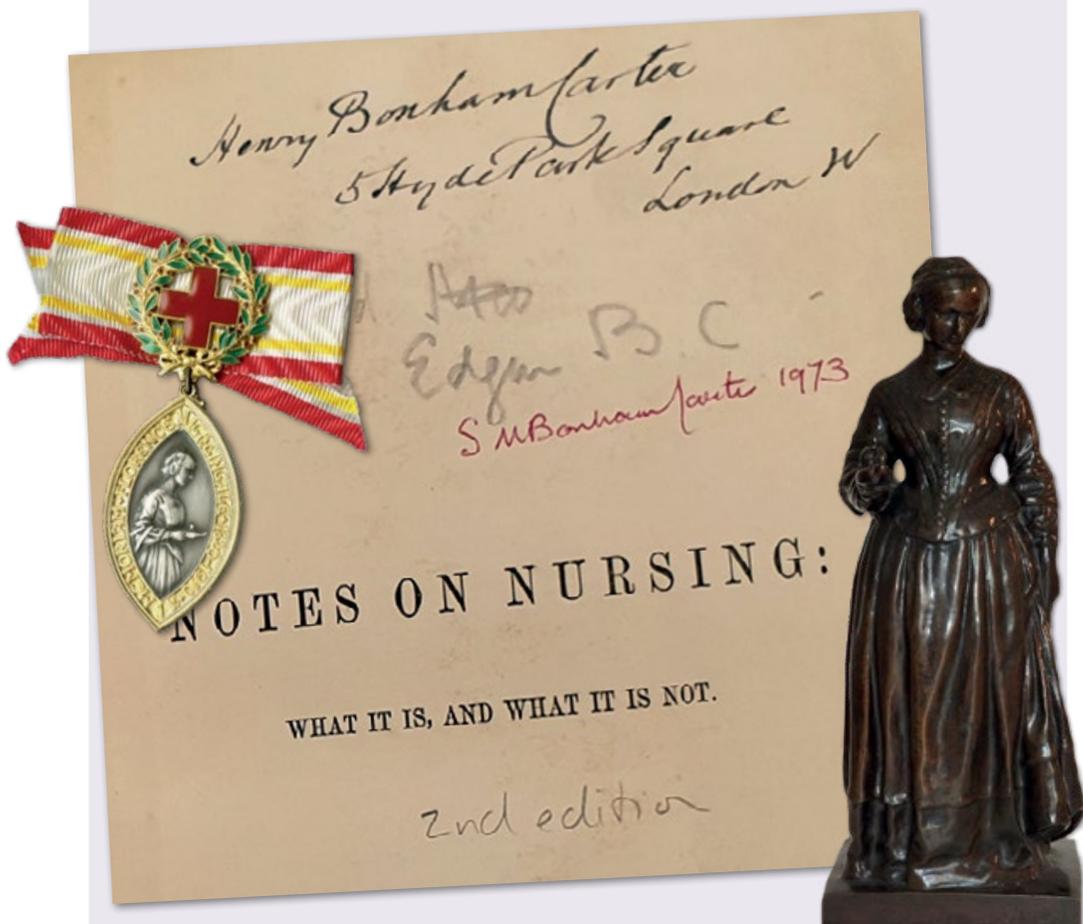
## Object lesson

The RCN Library and Archive is home to many fascinating Nightingale-related items. Last October, the History of Nursing Forum joined the RCN Scotland Student and Newly Qualified Nurse conference in Dundee to select five of these objects for the Florence Nightingale Museum's new exhibition.

Before the conference, the RCN Library and Archive team narrowed down the options to 10 iconic items, including letters, books, statues and medals. On the day, our librarian Emma Taylor presented the case for each object. Nursing students discussed their merits, before voting for the final five.

The winners reflect some of Nightingale's key achievements and qualities – there's her personal copy of *Notes on Nursing*, showing the emphasis she placed on patient care, her iconic Crimean lamp, and some of the many letters she traded with friends, collaborators and other nurses. They also show her importance to the RCN. The International Florence Nightingale medal, an award created by the Red Cross two years after her death, was awarded to RCN founder Sarah Swift in 1929 for her contribution to international nursing. The final object selected is a miniature bronze replica of AG Walker's *The Lady With the Lamp* statue found at London's Waterloo Place Crimea Memorial.

The RCN authorised these to be "made available at a reasonable cost to the nursing profession" and a niche was created in the RCN Library, London where the 18-inch-high statue was displayed during the 20th century.



# How RCN Connect made real change

Rudi Page helped set up RCN Connect two decades ago. Here, he reflects on its legacy

**B**ack in 2000, the Royal College of Nursing took action to support its black and minority ethnic (BME) members. RCN Connect aimed to develop networks and tools to improve cultural understanding in workplaces and challenge barriers BME members were experiencing. Over the three years it existed, Connect boosted the number of BME leaders and activists at the RCN through “communities of practice” – networks that reached out to BME nursing staff.

Key to RCN Connect’s success was the determination of institutional leadership to reduce discrimination and improve BME representation, both at the RCN and within NHS trusts and related bodies. From the RCN, Christine Hancock, Tom Bolger, Ann Leedham-Smith, Roswyn Hakesley-Brown, Sylvia Denton, Linda Bailey, Tom Sandford, Geraldine Cunningham and Jennifer Pearson played huge roles.

RCN Connect helped BME members take part in debates, forums and seminars. Pearson led the Ethnically Diverse Nursing Association, the first network supported by the RCN, which helped to increase BME membership involvement in Congress.

New models of leadership and management promoted the idea that “all voices must be heard” and used data to hold executives

accountable. Connect also got the RCN involved in the Mary Seacole Memorial Statue, and embraced a wide range of equality issues.

The past 20 years has taught us that we still need to pursue inclusion, fairness, wellbeing and psychological safety to maintain staff and public trust in local systems.

Wendy Irwin, Equalities Lead at the RCN, has seen the developing legacy of Connect: “The past two decades have seen further developments such as diversity champions, who distribute leadership of equality issues and build on the importance of allyship. The RCN has also embedded critical race theory for cultural ambassadors, which has the potential to make a profound difference to the experiences of BME members.

“Confronting racism in nursing is a marathon and not a sprint. The RCN commits to tackling these issues wherever they emerge.” ■

## GET CONNECTED

- Join the *Overcoming Unseen Barriers: Mindset Shift, Reflective Personal Journeys and Compassionate Safeguarding* webinar on 19 May 2020 at 10am, 4pm or 7pm. Visit [tinyurl.com/barrierswebinar](https://tinyurl.com/barrierswebinar)



Hellen Daley, Jennifer Pearson, Rudi Page, and Ann Marie and Bev Stephens (Image credit: Rudi Page)

# Avis Hutt: pushing the boundaries of nursing care

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Avis Hutt is a lesser-known but remarkable nurse and political campaigner – and the subject of a paper presented at the 2019 UK Association for the History of Nursing colloquium. Frances Cadd shares her research

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**A**vis Hutt was a radical nurse from 1935 until her death in 2010, and a peace activist in the Communist Party of Great Britain. Hutt's political activities and nursing work were often connected. During her training at Mile End Hospital in London's politically volatile and poverty-stricken East End in the late 1930s, she witnessed the opposing forces of communism and fascism while nursing the wounded of the Battle of Cable Street. She began joining anti-fascist campaigns, such as Medical Aid for Spain, and the burgeoning nurses' trade union movement. She campaigned with the Socialist Medical Association (SMA) for a socialised health care system, free at the point of use – ideas that influenced the National Health Service Act (1946).

The SMA was instrumental in Hutt's support for multidisciplinary health care teams. She felt it was the only group that allowed her, as a junior nurse, to speak with other health care professionals as equals. This was particularly important in elderly care, where a wide range of needs required different health care workers. As a nursing tutor from 1976-81 at the Middlesex Hospital, Hutt pioneered an interdisciplinary course in geriatric medicine for medical, nursing and physiotherapy students, promoting a team approach to care.

During World War Two, Hutt completed an industrial nursing course with the RCN. She moved to Birmingham, putting her skills to use in West Midlands factories. Simultaneously, she was active in the 1950s CND campaigns. In 1955, as secretary of the Birmingham People's Peace Committee, she joined a six-week mission to China. Her detailed accounts draw fascinating comparisons between British



Avis Hutt speaks at a peace rally in Coventry in 1958  
(Image credit: the estate of Avis Hutt)

and Chinese workers' occupational health standards, treatments, and welfare facilities.

In 2002, looking back on her life as a self-proclaimed rebel nurse and political animal, Hutt reflected that she felt she'd always been in a position to push the boundaries of nursing. ■

## READ MORE

- Find out more about UKAHN and its future colloquiums at [ukahn.org/wp/ukahn-colloquium-2020](http://ukahn.org/wp/ukahn-colloquium-2020)

# Who cares? The emotions of nursing

The RCN's new exhibition explores how expectations of nurses have evolved over 150 years

Inside the RCN's London headquarters, three stained glass windows illustrate the emotions that, 100 years ago, were associated with nursing: faith, fortitude and love.

Earlier this year, three new windows (pictured below) were unveiled in the RCN Library and Archives. Created by artist Rachel Mulligan, with input from RCN members across the UK, they “show the complexity of nursing: how the clinical and technical expertise and the emotional side of nursing are not separate,” says Sarah Chaney, RCN Events and Exhibition Manager and Research Fellow at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL).

They're part of the RCN's latest exhibition, *Who Cares? A History of Emotions in Nursing*. “Through history, one of the biggest

“ They saw a nurses’ sexual indiscretion as putting a bad light on the profession

problems in nursing is that the emotional side has just been assumed, and not acknowledged in terms of training, support or pay,” Sarah explains. “It’s an invisible part of the work, which we wanted to recognise.”

The exhibition explores the emotional side of nursing across six themes – birth, death, romance, faith, war and protest. It spans 150 years, drawing on research from QMUL’s



Centre for the History of the Emotions, funded by the Wellcome Trust.

### Ladylike and obedient

In the late 19th century, nursing was being defined as a profession. So too, were the qualities of the perfect nurse. “The nurse is being seen as someone who’s responsible for maintaining order, but also themselves being obedient,” Sarah says.

Upper-class “lady” nurses, such as Florence Nightingale and Ethel Gordon Fenwick, described the ideal nurse in class-based terms. “They tended to assume that if nurses behaved more like ladies, they would be better nurses,” Sarah says. “Nightingale would emphasise punctuality and looking clean, orderly and tidy.”

Religion also played a role. Nightingale’s bible is on display in the exhibition, while Fenwick claimed that those who treated nursing as just a job were neglecting their patients’ souls.

During the First World War, courage became a highly prized emotion. Edith Cavell, a nurse who helped free captured soldiers, “was celebrated for being completely calm and keeping a stiff upper lip.”

Sarah’s research focuses on the General Nursing Council’s efforts to “purify the profession” by striking nurses from the register between 1922 and 1936. Illegitimate children, divorces or affairs could end a career. “They

saw a nurses’ sexual indiscretion as putting a bad light on the profession,” she says.

### Nature and nurture

Following the Second World War, there was a drive to recruit young women with adverts that connected nursing with motherhood. Soon, the need for NHS efficiency meant the importance of expert clinical practice overtook visions of maternal instinct. By the 1980s, nurses were seen as advocates, balancing their patients’ clinical and emotional needs.

Only in recent years have the emotional needs of nurses themselves been highlighted. During research workshops with members, Sarah says, “There was a lot of talk about wellbeing and finding ways to manage your emotions.”

The toll of dealing with life and death situations while presenting a professional face under tough working conditions is becoming clearer. Perhaps over the next 150 years, the emotions nurses feel will be scrutinised as much as those they’ve been expected to perform. ■

### LEARN MORE

- *Who Cares? A History of Emotions in Nursing* is at the RCN Library and Heritage Centre in London until December 2021.
- Visit the exhibition online at [rcn.org.uk/emotions-exhibition](http://rcn.org.uk/emotions-exhibition)





# Three books for spring and summer

Reviews by Dianne Yarwood

**This issue, I have been fortunate to read and enjoy three books. In the spring 2019 edition, Susan Cohen revealed her next book would be a history of nurses and nursing – I am pleased to include it here. The others, more biographical in style, may prompt personal recollections. Of those of us who trained before the 1990s, who does not remember mindless routine and intimidating ward sisters?**

**S**usan hits the spot again, this time with a wonderfully illustrated overview of the development of nurses and nursing. The introduction takes us from ancient Greece, through religious orders to Eva Luckes, Mrs Wardroper and of course Florence Nightingale. However, her main focus is on advances in the 20th century, including the impact of war and developing professionalism of nursing.

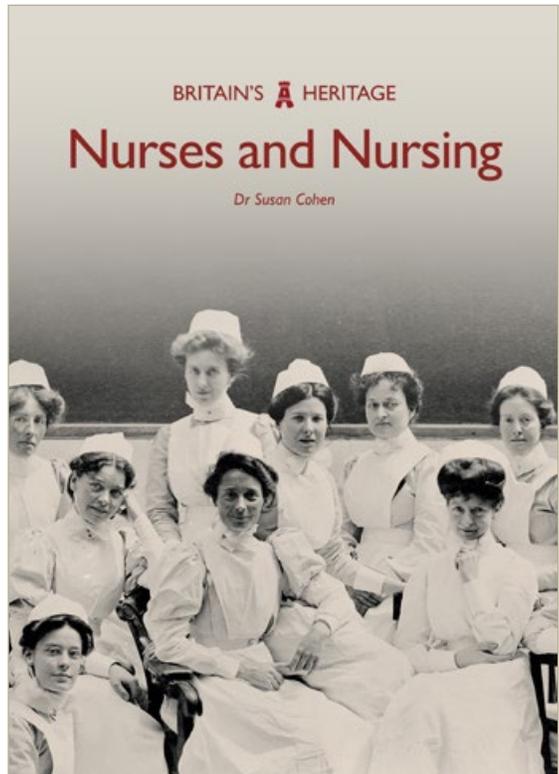
The author encompasses the efforts of Ethel Gordon Fenwick and nurse registration, the creation and expansion of the Royal College of Nursing, the establishment of the NHS and the development of an all-graduate profession. Examples of hospital badges, silver belt buckles, nurses' uniforms and professional publications bring the chapters to life.

There is an impressive amount of detail in this slim volume. Of particular interest is the final chapter 'What now?' which includes tips on research sources, publications and places to visit, and suggestions for further reading.

Although directed at a general readership, I recommend it to anyone with an interest in the development of nursing. ■

## Nurses and Nursing

DR SUSAN COHEN, AMBERLEY PUBLISHING 2019



# Rituals and Myths in Nursing: A Social History

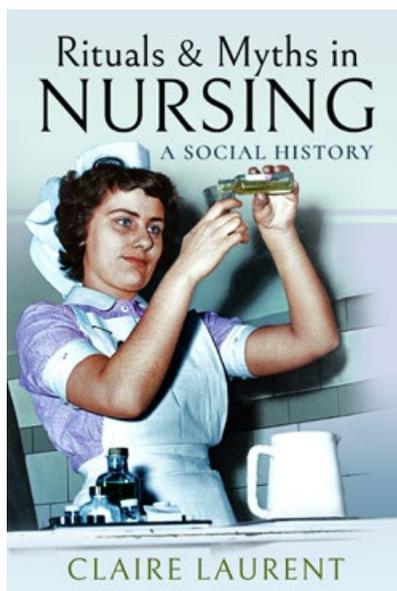
CLAIRE LAURENT, PEN AND SWORD 2019

This interesting, descriptive book may prompt nurses to say: “I always wondered why we did that!” Claire draws upon her own experiences, and those of other nurses, in a book rich with anecdote.

She covers a wide range of nursing practice, but there are times when the boundaries between rituals, myths, policy and procedure are blurred. There is some overstatement of the impact of the “medical model rigidity”: although in the post-NHS era much was taught in a systematic way, nursing students did receive rationales.

Nevertheless, it is a fascinating, sometimes amusing, account of nursing practice. Some stories are less accounts of ritual, more historical insight. For example, techniques for lifting and moving patients were taught in a structured way, but we now realise how damaging it could be for both patients and nurses.

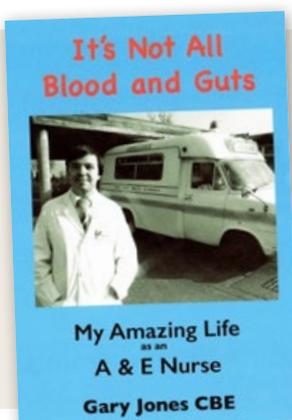
Claire has collected a vast amount of information for this interesting book. I am sure many will find it a nostalgic read. ■



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# It's Not All Blood and Guts: My Amazing Life as an A&E Nurse

GARY JONES CBE

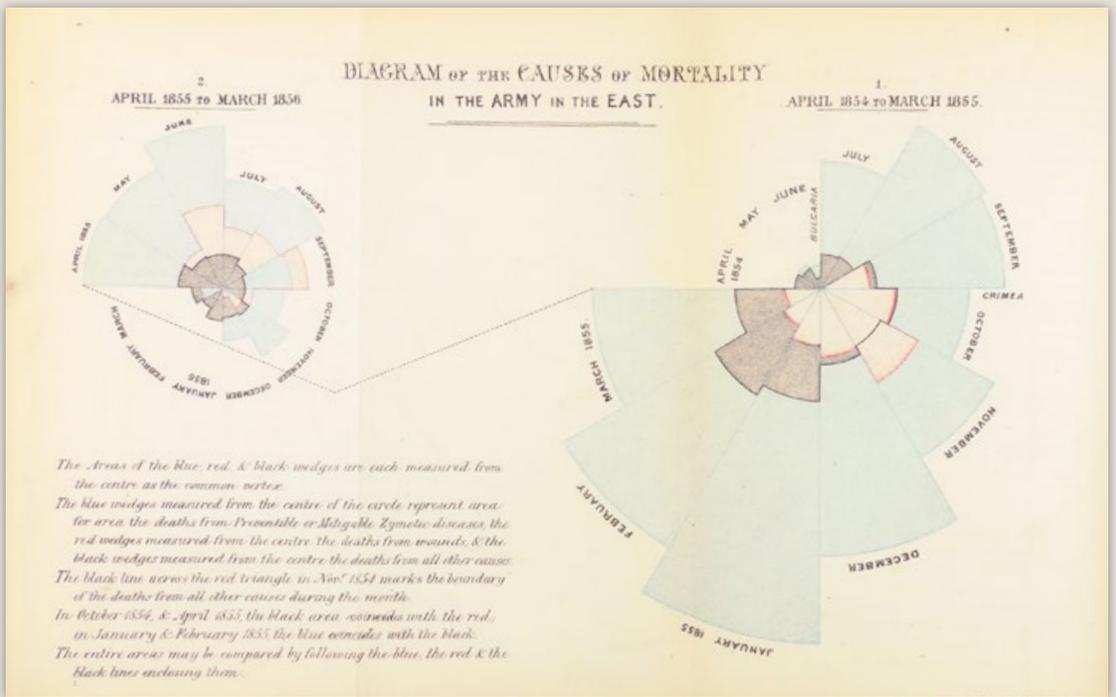


Gary's detailed, engaging account charts his time as a junior member of the Red Cross, a nursing cadet in Essex, general nurse training, leading developments in emergency nursing, and setting up a consultancy business.

Along the way he became an RCN Council member, chair of the RCN Accident and Emergency Nursing Association, and an RCN Fellow. He also developed a model of nursing for use in A&E departments and in 2003 received a CBE for services to emergency nursing. There is much to engage general and professional readers. ■

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One of Florence Nightingale's coxcomb charts showing causes of death among soldiers in the Crimean War – her talent for gathering and analysing data helped her campaign for health improvements within the British army

