

Library Subject Guide: Nursing Family History

Welcome to the RCN Library and Heritage Services subject guide to nursing family history.

We have split the guide into three sections depending on when your ancestor qualified, with a fourth section for nursing in wartime. To find out which guide you need you can use the following sum for an estimated qualification date:

Year of birth + 18 years (earliest age to enter training) + 2 years (shortest training length)

We hope that you find this useful and wish you luck with your research.

Nursing in Wartime

Step 1: Military Nursing

Before 1850, British military nursing services were made up of male nurses only. Records begin with applications to nurse during the Crimea war. The National Archives have put together a very thorough guide to researching your military nursing ancestors that can be found here:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/military-nursing/>

The National Archives have also put together three separate guides for each of the forces as follows:

British Army Nurses: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-army-nurses>

Royal Navy Nurses: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/royal-navy-nurses>

Royal Air Force Nurses: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/royal-air-force-nurse>

Medals:

Campaign Medals 1914-1920

British Army medal cards have been digitised and are available through the National Archives website: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/medal-index-cards-ww1.htm>

British Nurses who served overseas would have been awarded the standard campaign medals depending on where they served. These include the 1914 Star, 1914/15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal. All other medals would have been awarded for acts of bravery and gallantry. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Defence is not able to provide replacement World War One medals as all campaign medals were awarded either to the medal earner, or if deceased, to their next of kin.

1921 onwards

Medals from 1921 onwards are issued by the Ministry of Defence and can be claimed retrospectively and by next of kin. To find out if your ancestor was awarded any medals you will need to find request their service record as detailed on the National Archives website. More information on medal type can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/requests-for-personal-data-and-service-records> and information on how to claim medals can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/the-ministry-of-defence-medal-office>

Step 2: Voluntary Aid Detachments (VAD)

As well as nursing in the military services, many young women joined the British Red Cross during both World Wars to serve as Voluntary Aid Detachments. Fortunately, the original card index detailing service with the VADs for both World Wars is largely intact (an estimated 80-90%) and housed safely at the British Red Cross Museum and Archives. You can find more information about VAD's and record on their website: <http://www.redcross.org.uk/About-us/Who-we-are/Museum-and-archives/Resources-for-researchers/Volunteers-and-personnel-records>

Medals

World War One:

The British Red Cross War Medal was awarded to all members of the British Red Cross or it's Voluntary Aid Detachments who served in the **United Kingdom** between 4 August 1914 and 31 December 1919. You can find more information on medals and criteria for awarding on their website: <http://www.redcross.org.uk/About-us/Who-we-are/Museum-and-archives/Collections/Medals-and-badges>

World War Two:

No specific war medals were awarded by the British Red Cross to Voluntary Aid Detachments during World War Two but medals of proficiency and training in particular nursing techniques were. You can find more information on medals on their website: <http://www.redcross.org.uk/About-us/Who-we-are/Museum-and-archives/Collections/Medals-and-badges> Volunteers from a range of services were recognised by the ministry of defence and medals including the Defence Medal were awarded. More information about medals can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility>

Step 3: British Auxiliary Hospitals

During both World Wars a large range of buildings including town halls and schools to large and private houses both in the country and city were used as auxiliary hospitals by the British Red Cross. Auxiliary hospitals were attached to central military hospitals, which looked after patients who remained under military control. In all, there were over 3,000 auxiliary hospitals administered by Red Cross county directors and were usually staffed by a commandant, a quartermaster, a matron and members of the VAD's.

The following resource contains lists of all auxiliary homes in the UK under the Joint War Committee during World War One:

- "Reports of the joint war committee and the joint war finance committee of the British Red Cross Society and the order of St John of Jerusalem in England on voluntary aid rendered to the sick and wounded at home and abroad and to British prisoners of war, 1914 -1919". Published by HMSO, 1921.

Copies can be found at:

1. Aberdeen University
2. Bristol University
3. British Library
4. Cambridge University
5. Imperial War Museum
6. Institute of Historical Research
7. King's College London
8. Leeds University
9. London Library
10. National Archives
11. National Library of Wales
12. National Trust Library
13. Newcastle University
14. Oxford University
15. Queens University Belfast
16. Society of Friends
17. St. Andrews University
18. Wellcome Library
19. York Minster Library

The following resource contains lists of all auxiliary homes in the UK under the Joint War Organisation during World War Two:

- "Red Cross and St John: the official record of the humanitarian services of the war organisation of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St John of Jerusalem", compiled by PG Cambray and GGB Briggs. Published 1949.

A copy can be found at the following locations:

1. Bristol University
2. British Library
3. Cambridge University
4. City of London, Guildhall Library
5. Edinburgh Library
6. Exeter University
7. Imperial War Museum
8. King's College London Library
9. London Library
10. London School of Economics
11. National Library of Scotland
12. National Library of Wales
13. Oxford University
14. Royal College of Surgeons
15. Senate House Libraries, University of London
16. Trinity College Dublin
17. Wellcome Library

The British Red Cross did not keep hospital or patient's records centrally after the war. If you are interested in a particular auxiliary hospital you should consult the catalogue at your local County or City archive and records office. Some depositories will include information about the staff who worked there although this is not guaranteed. You can find more information about auxiliary

hospitals here: <http://www.redcross.org.uk/About-us/Who-we-are/Museum-and-archives/Historical-factsheets/Nurses-and-hospitals>

Step 4: Nurse Training Record

Florence Nightingale set up the first nurse training school at St. Thomas Hospital, London in 1860. Her passion for formal nurse training led to her establishing a three year training course. News of her success spread across London and the United Kingdom where many more hospitals began to offer training.

The hospital records database lists UK hospitals past and present. You can search for the hospital where your ancestor trained to find the archive that holds records for nursing or staffing: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/hospitalrecords/search.asp> For example, type 'St Thomas' in the 'hospital name' search box and chose 'St Thomas' Hospital, London'. Scroll to the bottom and you will see that records relating to Nursing 1844-1996 and staff 1871-1999 are found at London Metropolitan Archive.

Please note that due to changes in the NHS some records in the database may be out of date. If you are unable to locate records, check with your local record office. To find your local record office, you can search here: <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/find-an-archive>

Step 5: Other records

British Army Nurses (1899-1902)

For his PhD research, Dr Keiron Spires created a database of nurses who served in the Boer War. You can search the database here:

<http://britisharmynurses.com/wiki/index.php?title=Special:IframePage/Database> and can find more information about Keiron's work here: <http://britisharmynurses.com/web/>

Friends Ambulance Unit (1914-1919)

The Library of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) have digitised approximately 2500 personnel cards for the Friends Ambulance Unit (1914-1919) Card hold information including reasons for joining the Unit, religious beliefs, occupations, skills, service in the Unit, and in the majority of cases, photographs. You can search these records online: <http://fau.quaker.org.uk>

Territorial Force Nursing Service (TFNS) (1914-1919)

Over 7,000 women served with the TFNS during World War One in 25 UK based and 18 overseas hospitals. This list contains names of 5-6000 women who served with the TFNS and were awarded medals for their work, including the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal, plus one of the rarest First World War campaign medals, the Territorial War Medal. You can search the list here: <https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/collections/135/territorial-force-nursing-service-medal-rolls/>

Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)

You can search the CWGC for service men and women and civilians who passed during both World Wars and where they are remembered: <http://www.cwgc.org/>

Step 6: National Archives: Discovery

You can search the National Archives Discovery for information on local archives and their recent accessions. To search, chose 'advanced search' and enter your key word. For example, your ancestors name, hospital name, or general search term such as 'nurse' and check the 'search other archives' box at the bottom: <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

Step 7: Historical Nursing Journals

If you haven't found a record for your ancestor using the above lists; your next step will be to search nursing journals and local newspapers. Journals include information on appointments, profiles on nurses and hospitals as well as news in nursing and opinion pieces.

Nursing Record/British Journal of Nursing (1888-1956)

Digitised journal available freely online.

http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/library_and_heritage_services/library_collections/rcn_archive/historical_nursing_journals

The Nursing Mirror (1907-1985)

<http://rcn.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?bookMark=ePnHCXMw42JgAfZbU1ngKysMDTngSy6ArXVOBJ5oP1ghN7OoCHR3ipSba4izh25Rcl48dMwiPtHIElh5gl7txSMJAJtJHNY>

The Nursing Times (1905 -)

<http://rcn.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?bookMark=ePnHCXMw42JgAfZbU1nAR9yZABtvZkYcsJLRyMzliJOBf9oPVgBvcuBmkHJzDXH20C1KzouHDlnEJwILTWBCM8lrCQBuqRxB>

Viewable by appointment only at the RCN Library and Heritage Centre

http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/library_and_heritage_services/library_services/access-policy

For local newspapers, you will need to either consult your local archive or the British library newspaper archive:

http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/?utm_medium=cpc&utm_source=google&utm_campaign=brand&utm_content=brand&utm_term=Britishlibrarynewspaperarchive&gclid=Cj0KEQIA0-GxBRDWsePx0pPtp4sBEiQACuTLNsyHG34nZKnN50zIWkDdXtnp281Oy_rGp6ngnX1KWXAaAvaa8P8HAQ&dclid=COetgKXC9MgCFcooFgodwqcOJw

Step 8: Further Research

For further information about war time nursing you can consult the libraries and archives at the following institutions:

1. Royal College of Nursing Archive: <http://archives.rcn.org.uk/CalmView/> For private papers, oral histories and photographs.
2. Royal College of Nursing Special Collections: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/library> For published material including nursing hospital and health history.
3. Florence Nightingale Museum: <http://www.florence-nightingale.co.uk/> For information on nurses who served and nursing during the Boer War.
4. Army Medical Services Museum: <http://www.ams-museum.org.uk/museum/>
5. Imperial War Museum: <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/search> For books, journals, private papers, photographs and oral histories. The museum have also digitised and made

available their collection of Trench and Hospital journals:

<http://www.proquest.com/products-services/trench.html>

6. The Long, Long Trail: <http://www.1914-1918.net/> For tracking campaigns and details of Field Ambulances and General Hospitals.
7. The Wellcome Library and Archives: <http://wellcomelibrary.org/search-the-catalogues/>
8. London Gazette Online: <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/> for anyone mentioned in dispatches.
9. The Times Archive: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/archive/> for anyone mentioned in dispatches.
10. National Army Museum: <http://www.nam.ac.uk/collection>
11. Unit war diaries: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/first-world-war/centenary-unit-war-diaries/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=The+National+Archives&utm_campaign=3547041_First+World+War+Unit+War+Diaries+mail&utm_content=unitwardiaries

Further Reading

Hallett, E. (2014) *Veiled warriors: allied nurses of the First World War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Available for RCN members to borrow and public reference from RCN Library Services
<http://rcn.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?bookMark=ePnHCXMw42JgAfZbU5nBp9dYgI53sJThgA96GJtbGBhZcjLwh6UCE32KQnliUVFmflExN4OUm2uIs4duUXJePHTgj7R2BhYvYG2BOGRBAAZZR4E>

McEwen, Y. (2014) *In the company of nurses: the history of the British Army Nursing Service in the Great War*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

- Available for RCN members to borrow and public reference from RCN Library Services
<http://rcn.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?bookMark=ePnHCXMw42JgAfZbU5khZ9uYgw90MzS05IDGsZERqllhacbjIOGZpwBs4yqkQ9K9Qn6aAmTdAjeDIJtriLOHblFyXjx0ECM-0djYBNhSMclrCQCtHiH0>

Fell, A. (2013) *First World War nursing: new perspectives*, Abingdon: Routledge.

- E-book (member only) View this e-book
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?authtype=shib&custid=s7108731&direct=true&site=ehost-live&db=nlebk&AN=593631&scope=site> (login required)
- Available for RCN members to borrow and public reference from RCN Library Services
http://rcn.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?bookMark=ePnHCXMw42JgAfZbU5IBI_IYmwCby8AGPgc0goHVCTBNG1hyMoi7AfvkJQrgU0EVyhOLFKAT3dwMUM6ulc4eukXJefHQAYz4RGNj0AYhi7ySAE77ITs

Mortimer, B. (2012) *Sisters: memories from the courageous nurses of world war two*, London: Hutchinson.

- Available for RCN members to borrow and public reference from RCN Library Services
<http://rcn.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?bookMark=ePnHCXMw42JgAfZbU5IBHSBLYOsA2OIFzReagy55AadaeJpwM7MEgDxQVczNIubmGOHvoFiXnxUMHK-ITjYHloxnovF48kgCGxBmd>