

Autumn 2016

# History of Nursing Society newsletter

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### Something to say?

Send contributions for the next newsletter to the editor:

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*Historic nursing uniforms were on display at Congress to mark the RCN's centenary.*

## A successful six months

Welcome to the autumn 2016 issue of the RCN History of Nursing Society (HoNS) newsletter

The last six months have been a very busy and fascinating time for our society. HoNS members have celebrated the RCN's centenary year, commemorated the Battle of the Somme, engaged in Nurses' Day activities and attended Congress.

We also held a number of successful events at RCN HQ in London. These included Elizabeth Crawford lecturing on nursing and the women's suffrage movement, Pauline Brand speaking about Marie Stopes and the birth control movement, and Gordon Lees reflecting on 40 years as a rep. Betty Kershaw also spoke on the *Northern Powerhouse: Manchester Nurses Who Shaped the Profession*, and there will be a chance to hear her talk again in Chester on 5 April 2017 at 4pm if you missed it. Finally, Professor John Wells and Dr Michael Bergin gave a presentation on the work of stretcher bearers.

While at Congress (see above) we hosted three events. Two focused on the RCN's founders and the third was a talk by Dick and Lisa Robinson on the diaries kept by Dick's great aunt Edith Appleton during the First World War. Our engagement even spread to the silver belt buckles in the uniform display which were provided by myself and Claire Chatterton. I am also pleased to say that I managed to contribute to the discussion on building upon the achievements of the past 100 years. My plea to members, then as now, is to capture your memories, collect memorabilia and add it to the RCN's archive.

**Dianne Yarwood, newsletter editor**



*Sarah Chaney (kneeling at the front), Teresa Doherty (third from the right) and Frances Reed (second from the left) during the We Carry the Torch relay*

## Centenary update

Claire Chatterton was invited to represent the HoNS at a special reception at Speaker's House in the House of Commons to mark the RCN's centenary (see below). She gave a short talk about the history of nursing and the RCN. She has also been invited to speak to the branches in Blackpool and Liverpool in October, and at the RCN North West's regional conference in Warrington on 4 November.

Alison O'Donnell spoke in Edinburgh about one of the RCN's founders, Annie Warren Gill, and the establishment of the Scottish office. Dianne Yarwood also travelled to Plymouth University to speak about the history of entry into nursing.

We are also very grateful to RCN staff for their ongoing support. Congratulations to Teresa Doherty, RCN Library and Archives Services Joint Manager, and her colleagues, Sarah Chaney and Frances Reed (who work so hard on our exhibition and events programme), on successfully completing a stage of the RCN centenary relay We Carry the Torch, which is raising money for the RCN Foundation (see above).



*From left to right: RCN President Cecilia Anim, HoNS Chair Claire Chatterton, and RCN Chief Executive Janet Davies*

## Letter from Claire Chatterton, Chair of the HoNS

As this newsletter makes clear, the HoNS continues to be involved with all kinds of historical events and projects. I am very grateful to my fellow committee members for all their help and support – Dianne Yarwood, Alison O'Donnell, Jane Brooks, Tristan Griffin and Margaret Graham. We are sorry that Helen Goldsmith has had to resign from the committee and we are currently in the process of recruiting her replacement. We would like to thank her for her enthusiasm and for the successful events that she organised in West Yorkshire. We were also very sorry to hear of the death of Sue Light, an expert on First World War nursing who ran the excellent websites, Scarlet Finders and The Fairest Force. She will be sorely missed.

We're always keen to encourage members to get involved and I was pleased to meet up with Liz Howard-Thornton while I was in Blackpool on Nurses' Day. Liz is hoping to start a local HoNS group for North Lancashire and South Cumbria. For more information please contact Liz on [liz.thornton@bfwhospitals.nhs.uk](mailto:liz.thornton@bfwhospitals.nhs.uk)



*Nora Flanagan*

The London and South East group continues to thrive and I enjoy attending their meetings when my travels bring me southwards. At their spring meeting, Dianne Yarwood and I presented some flowers and a card to Nora Flanagan, who was retiring as Operational Manager for the London region, to thank her for all of her support throughout.

If you would like to set up a group or hold an event in your local area do get in touch at [c.s.chatterton@open.ac.uk](mailto:c.s.chatterton@open.ac.uk). We would also like to mark the role of naval nurses during the First World War. If you are doing research in that field please get in touch.

## Ancestry project

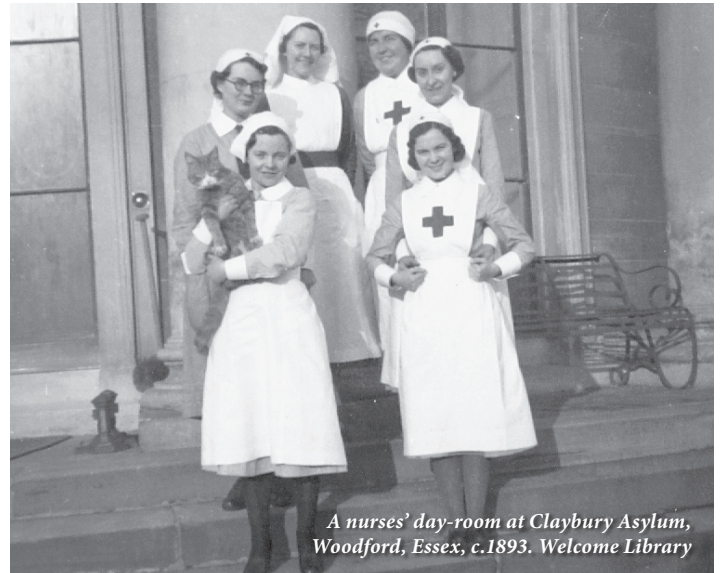
The RCN Library and Archives Service is pleased to announce the launch of their Ancestry collection pages. This work has made 70 years of nursing, family and women's history available online for the first time.

Nursing registers from the UK and Ireland between 1898 and 1968, and Scottish nursing applications from 1921 to 1945, have been digitised and individual nurses' records can be accessed via the Ancestry website. All of the RCN's records on Ancestry offer basic information, such as name and registration number, but some include additional details for further insight.

In the past, most professional registers were male dominated. However, these nursing records are female-centric which provides a fascinating glimpse into female experiences of, and contributions to, nursing practice.

The RCN regularly provides guidance to families wanting to research their nursing predecessors. With these resources available online, more families will be able to explore the lives and contributions made by their relatives.

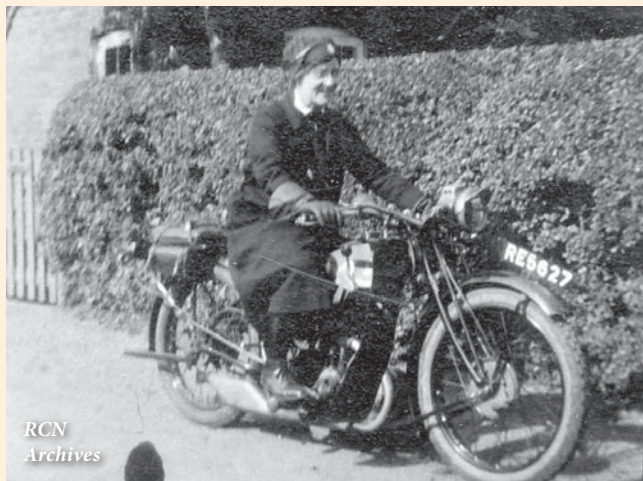
RCN Library and Archive Services Joint Manager Teresa Doherty said: "Everyone has a nurse in the family. Finding your nursing ancestor and discovering her achievement is a proud moment. Seeing the impact and legacy of individual nurses is now possible which raises the profile of nursing history with the public on a personal level."



*A nurses' day-room at Claybury Asylum, Woodford, Essex, c.1893. Welcome Library*

Access to the records is via the Ancestry website, [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

Ancestry is a subscription-only website, but RCN members are able to access it for free from any of the library computers. For more information visit the Library's Family History webpage at [www.rcn.org.uk/library/services/family-history](http://www.rcn.org.uk/library/services/family-history) or email us at [familyhistory@rcn.org.uk](mailto:familyhistory@rcn.org.uk)



RCN Archives

## Public health exhibition

The HoNS continues actively to grow our links with other RCN forums and societies. To that end, Jane Brooks and Claire Chatterton have worked with the Public Health Forum to organise a new exhibition exploring the history of public health nursing. It will be displayed in the RCN Library and Heritage Centre from October to next spring. For more details please visit [www.rcn.org.uk/library](http://www.rcn.org.uk/library)

## Monica Baly Bursary

The bursary is awarded annually for the promotion of scholarship in nursing history. Successful applicants are awarded between £300 and £1,000, which they can use to fund activities related to the history of nursing, including courses, projects or research.

Past winners include Tommy Dickinson in 2010. The bursary helped fund his examination into the experiences of men being treated for homosexuality with aversion therapy, and the nurses who cared for them. His resultant book, 'Curing Queers', was highly regarded and reviewed in the spring 2016 newsletter.

Look out for details of this year's winners in the spring 2017 issue of the HoNS newsletter.

For more information about the bursary visit <http://tinyurl.com/oz7vjqh>



## A WW1 experience

This summer Christine Hallett, former HoNS committee member, developed and organised *The University of Manchester: WW1 Casualty Clearing Station* at the national commemoration of the centenary of the Battle of the Somme in Manchester.

Claire Chatterton, current chair of the committee, offered her invaluable support to this project. Her knowledge and understanding of the work performed by First World War nurses was a significant contribution to the work.

The project team partnered with Manchester City Council as part of the Department for Culture Media & Sport's *Somme 100* project to commemorate the battle's centenary. The casualty clearing



*The casualty clearing station with Christine Hallett (fourth from the right)*

station was part of the "Experience Field". Staff gave up many hours of their time in developing this important public impact project. It was a huge success and achieved very positive and enthusiastic feedback.

Many thanks to Christine and Claire, and also to the other members of the project team: Sam Freeman, Dianne Burns, Tommy Dickinson, Pat Conaghan, Maisie Jones, Sarah-Louise Flowers and Lisa Hinde.

## Reflecting on the Somme

**Liz Howard-Thornton reflects on a moving event commemorating the Battle of the Somme**

I had been busy all day, on my feet, and my back ached. As I crawled deeper into my sleeping bag and wrapped my blue woollen nurse's cape around me, I was cold. It was raining and the wind blew in

through the half-laced doorway of the heavy canvas tent. The bells on the 15th-century church rang out every 15 minutes so sleep was impossible, and I knew we had to be up at 4.30am to make sure the men were ready to leave for the front before 7.30am...

This may sound like a passage from a book, but it was in fact the beginning of four days I will never forget: *Somme 100* at Mailly Maillet in France was truly amazing. I am a member of the 24th General Hospital Division of the Great War Society, a living history group which provides authentic demonstrations of life in the field. At the invitation of the townspeople and their mayor, I joined about 60 men and six other women to help the village commemorate the centenary of the Battle of the Somme (pictured left).

The battle has become known for its colossal casualties. The first day alone saw the loss of 58,000 British troops, making it the single most costly day in British military history.

For more information, visit <http://www.somme-battlefields.com>



## Nursing in a Time of Conflict

### Dr Jane Brooks reports on another insightful UK Association for the History of Nursing (UKAHN) annual colloquium

This year's event was called *Nursing in a Time of Conflict* and was held in July at the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC) Regimental Headquarters in Camberley.

The day began with a moving portrayal of plastic surgery during the First World War by Claire Chatterton and Marilyn McInnes, an independent researcher whose grandfather had been treated by the pioneering plastic surgeon Harold Gillies. Erin Spinney followed with an insight into the significant nursing abilities of navy and army nurses in the early 19th century. The final morning paper came from Jane Brooks who explored the exigencies of frontline army nursing work during the Second World War.

Keiron Spires' keynote was on a military nurse's perspective of their own history. This was an excellent opportunity to reflect on insider research, and the variety and range of perspectives historians bring to their work.

Other papers focusing on the First World War included Stuart Wildman presenting his illuminating work on nursing on the

home front, Nadia Atia's lively presentation on the narratives of nurses from the desert, and Rosie Wall exploring the men who worked for the Red Cross during the First World War.

The final paper, presented by Orly Kolpak, considered the challenges of caring for civilian casualties on the Israeli-Syrian border. She noted how longstanding distrust between the two countries affects current relationships between nurses and patients.

UKAHN are most grateful to our colleague Lt Col Dr Keiron Spires (Retd) for organising the event. Special thanks also to Lt Colonel Gary Kenward, Colonel Karen Irvine, Chief Nursing Officer of the QARANC, and Sue Bush, Colonel Commandant of the Heritage Committee, for their hospitality.

Next year's colloquium will take place in Huddersfield in July. Calls for abstracts will appear later this year at [www.ukahn.org](http://www.ukahn.org)



From left to right: HoNS members Sarah Rogers, Nora Flanagan, Margaret Dorman, Claire Chatterton and Alison Spires

### Dianne Yarwood recommends *Sisters of the Somme: True Stories from a First World War Field Hospital* by Penny Starns (The History Press, 2016)



Penny Starns offers an unusually detailed record of the establishment of a large purpose-built base hospital serving the front line. It took its first casualties in September 1915 and was disbanded

in March 1919, having admitted 36,100 men. Drawing upon primary sources ranging from official communications and reports to personal letters, the detailed descriptions of working life are impressive and persuasive. There are, however,

moments of purple prose which are not fully referenced and sit rather uncomfortably in a factual account of life in a field hospital.

The hospital's facilities included two operating theatres, an X-ray unit and an ECG department. Medical and nursing care included the use of the Thomas splint, wound irrigation techniques, glycerine dressings and the care of those suffering from shell-shock. These are often described in graphic detail and effectively convey the experiences of patients and staff.

Also highlighted is how differently the commissioned and enlisted men were

treated, both in the attitudes towards them and the resources available to them.

Overall this is a detailed, poignant and well researched book, but I was at times frustrated by the lack of more comprehensive source details and by the over simplified descriptions of the fight for nurse registration and the establishment of the College of Nursing.

Nonetheless, Penny's ability to interlock numerous sources to demonstrate the advanced and sophisticated nature of one field hospital is an impressive achievement. I do recommend this book as an example of a new approach to First World War history.

## Nursing an epidemic

**Sarah Rogers, a recent Monica Baly bursary recipient, gives us an overview of her research into the 1897 Maidstone Typhoid Epidemic**

My research explored the social class and training of a cohort of nurses who worked during the 1897 Maidstone Typhoid Epidemic, just as the mid-19th-century reforms in nursing were taking hold. The aim was to determine whether the social class of epidemic nurses fitted the historical perceptions of a middle class nursing establishment. In addition, the length and nature of their training and the type of hospital they trained in was investigated.

I began with a newspaper list of named nurses who had been presented with a Maidstone Typhoid Epidemic medal (pictured) for nursing during, what was then, the largest such epidemic in England. More than 260 nurses were named and I identified further nurses during my research: as many as 450 might have worked during the epidemic.

Prosopography identified two common characteristics, those of social class and the training undertaken. Both were key elements of mid-19th-century nursing reforms.

Genealogical research techniques identified their fathers' occupations prior to their training beginning. This was an important indicator of social class.

The nurses were then allocated to a social class using Armstrong's classification tool. This identified the social class of 101 nurses. I also identified the social class of two subgroups: the London Hospital nurses and agency nurses from the London Nurses' Cooperation.

Furthermore, investigation of a wide range of primary sources helped me identify the training hospitals of 131 nurses. Subgroups

of nurses were also examined, such as those with fever training experience, and those who had trained in voluntary versus non-voluntary hospitals. My research highlighted how gaps in the surviving records can hamper research, especially since the majority were single women without descendants.

Some of the nurses were identified using a number of historical research methods. For example, information about Emily Margaret Whiteman was found in, among other places, a citation in the *South Eastern Gazette* and on the Boer War database, due to her membership of the Princess Christian's Army Nursing Service Reserve.

The main conclusion of my research is that most of the Maidstone Typhoid Epidemic nurses were indeed middle class. This is because 69% of nurses came from the middling classes of II and III.



© Sarah Rogers

## A window into the past

**Mavis Maureen Raper explains why she collects antique medical instruments**

My passion for collecting antique medical instruments began when I inherited my ancestors' medical equipment. I quickly became the proud owner of certificates, equipment, badges, books, records and artefacts. Each time I was given an antique, I felt that another part of nursing history had been revealed.

My grandfather was a medic in the Boer War and owned his own instruments. He was proud of his collection which included fine silk-lined cases with purple velvet interiors. Suture needles were similar to sewing needles until 1870 when curved needles with a cutting edge were introduced. My grandfather stored his in a concave tortoiseshell case. He also left me a wooden splint which worked on both arms, and a ten-inch clinical thermometer similar to that designed by Dr William Aitken.

My grandmother was proud that I had chosen nursing as a career and would tell me interesting stories about her life. She was one of the first qualified midwives and her bag contained a variety of feeding equipment, teats, and douche cans made of fine porcelain and later metal. Enema equipment was highly decorative: it was made of French porcelain, silver and wood and had a brass funnel for rectal insertion.

Collecting antique medical instruments is an almost uncharted activity and the establishment of facts and principles on the subject is a gradual process. We learn from the past and to see instruments of intricate and fine workmanship beautifully presented, shaped and moulded in carved wooden cases is a means of opening a window into the past.

Collecting antique literature and instruments is an adventure into nursing and medical history, and I highly recommend it to all.



Mavis Maureen with her collection of medical instruments

## Hospital reflection

**Michael Jones, a member of Whitchurch Hospital Historical Society, writes about the end of an era**

Whitchurch Hospital in Cardiff closed in April 2016 ending 108 years of direct patient care for those experiencing mental health problems. Opening on 15 April 1908 as the Cardiff City Mental Hospital, it was built to house 800 male and female patients on 20 wards, along with facilities for supporting staff.

The first medical superintendent was Dr Edwin Goodall, the first matron was Florence Emily Raynes and the first head male attendant was Charles Humber.

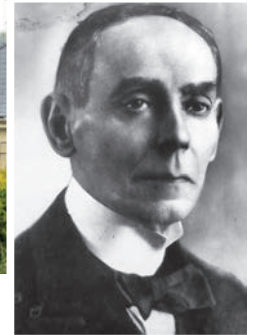
The early decades established the research credentials of the hospital with emphasis on identifying physical causes of mental illness.

During the two world wars, the hospital was used as a military facility for war casualties. A legacy of the First World War was the enhanced role of female nurses caring for male patients. This was championed by Dr Goodall, much to the chagrin of male attendants.

After the creation of the NHS in 1948, the hospital was renamed Whitchurch Hospital. It adjusted to the introduction of anti-psychotic



Left: Whitchurch Hospital.  
Below: Edwin Goodall, the first medical superintendent



medication and major legal changes incorporated in the Mental Health Act of 1959.

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed major changes, including the development of specialist services such as alcohol and drug misuse, adolescent and child psychiatry, care of the older person, industrial therapy, physiotherapy and the first community psychiatric nursing department.

Moves towards community-based patient care also resulted in a major reduction in inpatient beds and an increase in the establishment of

crisis-intervention teams and other community services. Inpatient services are now based at Llandough Hospital.

Whitchurch Hospital Historical Society has harvested and catalogued a substantial archive of material reflecting the history of the hospital. Much of this was displayed during a two-week *End of an Era* exhibition held in March and April to mark the hospital's closure. For more information visit [www.whitchurchhospital.co.uk](http://www.whitchurchhospital.co.uk) or follow [@WhitchurchHosp](https://twitter.com/WhitchurchHosp) on Twitter.

## Memories of Nursing

**Eileen Richardson explains how the Retired Nurses National Home in Bournemouth will be remembered**

The Retired Nurses National Home was set up and took in its first residents in December 1938. Over the last few years, fewer nurses have been seeking residence as many more now have their own families and support networks after retirement. This is rather different from when the home was opened and many nurses were single and living in hospital accommodation while working.

As a result, the home now has a number of non-nurses as residents in order to secure its own viability. This has been a propitious time

to record the stories of the nursing residents so they are not lost for future generations of historians and nurses to appreciate. Residents have many experiences of historical importance to record: a number practised during the Second World War and witnessed the birth of the NHS. The Heritage Lottery Fund has provided support to ensure all those who remain

with us are included in the archive. The stories are being transcribed so that they are accessible to share with the community and for further historical research.

The information collated in this way is now available at [www.memoriesofnursing.uk](http://www.memoriesofnursing.uk). It is the intention that they will also become part of the RCN archive.

A new website has been developed telling the story of Memories of Nursing (MoN), an oral history project that is a collaboration between the Retired Nurses National Home (RNNH) and Bournemouth University supported financially by the Heritage Lottery Fund and with advice from the Dorset History Centre.

You can:

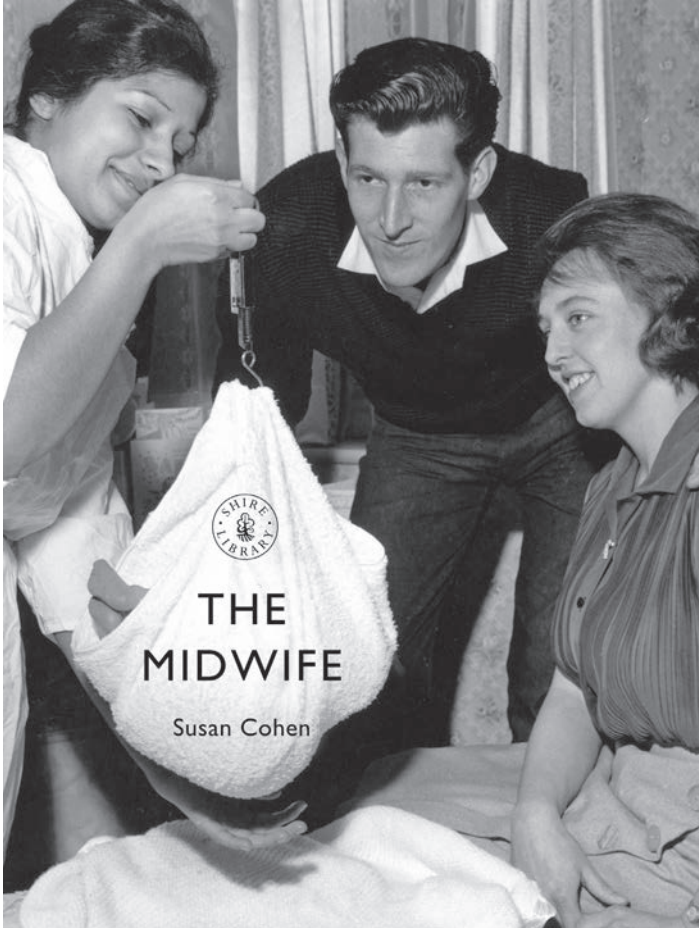
- Listen to audio clips from retired nurses about practice in the last century
- Access considerable information about the RNNH
- Learn about the history of nursing, generally and locally to Bournemouth, and the oral history research approach
- Link to other sources committed to preserving memories from the past

[www.memoriesofnursing.uk](http://www.memoriesofnursing.uk)

Please join us!

Heritage Lottery Funded Project

**Dianne Yarwood** recommends *The Midwife* by Susan Cohen (Bloomsbury Shire, 2016)



Susan Cohen has produced a superbly illustrated and compact volume describing the development of midwifery from the 18th to the 21st century.

Her book adopts a broad approach to the development of midwifery education and practice in Britain. The social, financial and training difficulties faced by midwives in the 1920s and 1930s are highlighted alongside numerous examples of how midwives helped families living in poor conditions. This includes the challenges of dealing with post-war rationing.

She also brings us up to date with chapters on practice after the formation of the NHS, including the 1960s, and concludes with an overview of 21st-century midwifery.

The book is richly illustrated with certificates of practice, pupil midwives' case books, labour ward notes and many photographs from across the years. It is well referenced and would be a good starting point for those wishing to research the development of midwifery as a profession, as well as of general interest to nurses and midwives working today.

**Claire Chatterton** recommends *The Story of Nursing in British Mental Health Hospitals: Echoes from the Corridors* by Niall McCrae and Peter Nolan (Routledge, 2016)

The history of mental health nursing in Britain has often been described as a relatively neglected aspect of nursing history. Prior to 1993, when Peter Nolan published his book on the subject, it had an especially low profile.

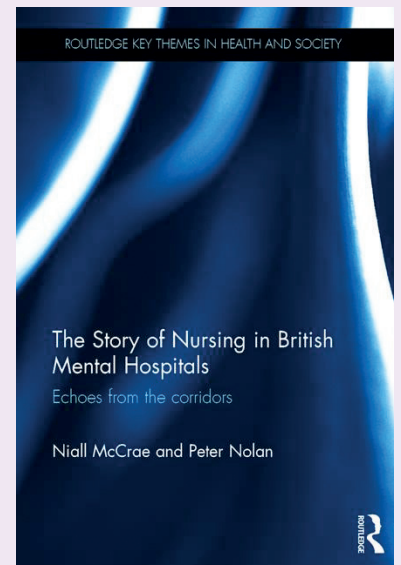
“ A RICH, DETAILED AND FASCINATING ACCOUNT ”

Despite a number of articles published by researchers since then, Nolan's book remained one of the few of its kind.

It is therefore pleasing to see this new work, in which Peter Nolan has worked with Niall McCrae

to produce a more extensive and updated history of the development of mental health nursing in Britain. The book skilfully combines archival material and oral testimony to give a rich, detailed and fascinating account of this area of nursing history. It does not shy away from examining the less positive aspects of psychiatric practice and nurses' roles within this, but it takes a balanced approach and rightly recognises that there were caring and hardworking nurses who did their best to ameliorate their patients' suffering.

One of the book's strengths is its accessibility, which makes it appealing to a wider audience. The authors place mental health nursing within its broader social and political context, and recognise its place within the multi-disciplinary team. Unlike some books which are best dipped into, this work is well worth a detailed read and will leave the reader with a nuanced and comprehensive overview of the history of this field of nursing practice.



If you've read a book related to nursing recently and would like to review it for the next issue of this newsletter, get in touch with editor Dianne Yarwood at [d.yarwood@ntlworld.com](mailto:d.yarwood@ntlworld.com)