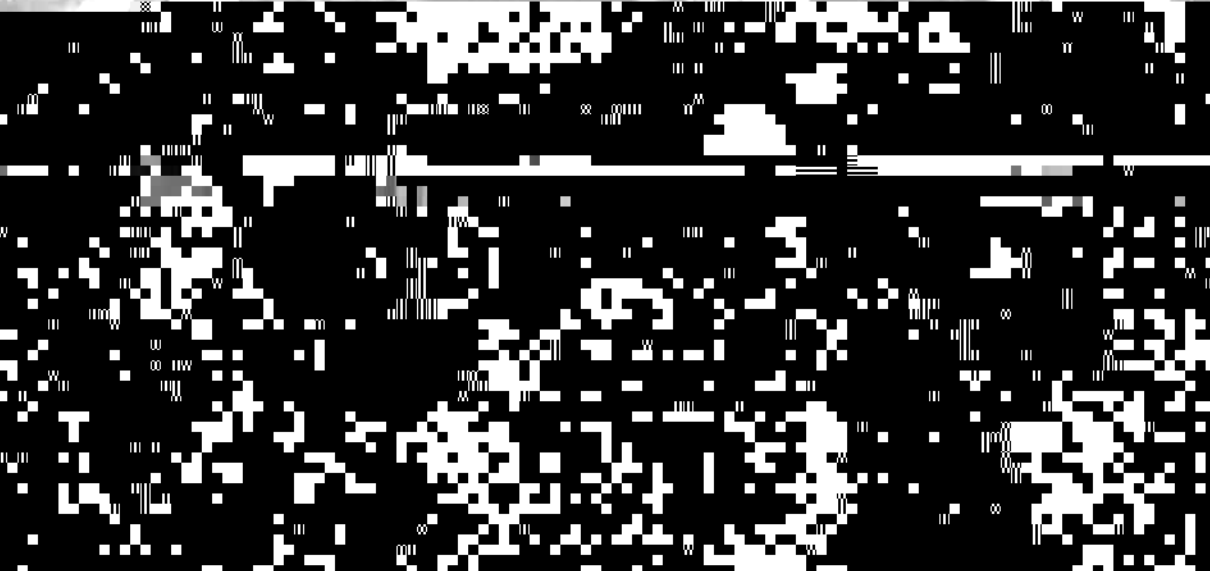


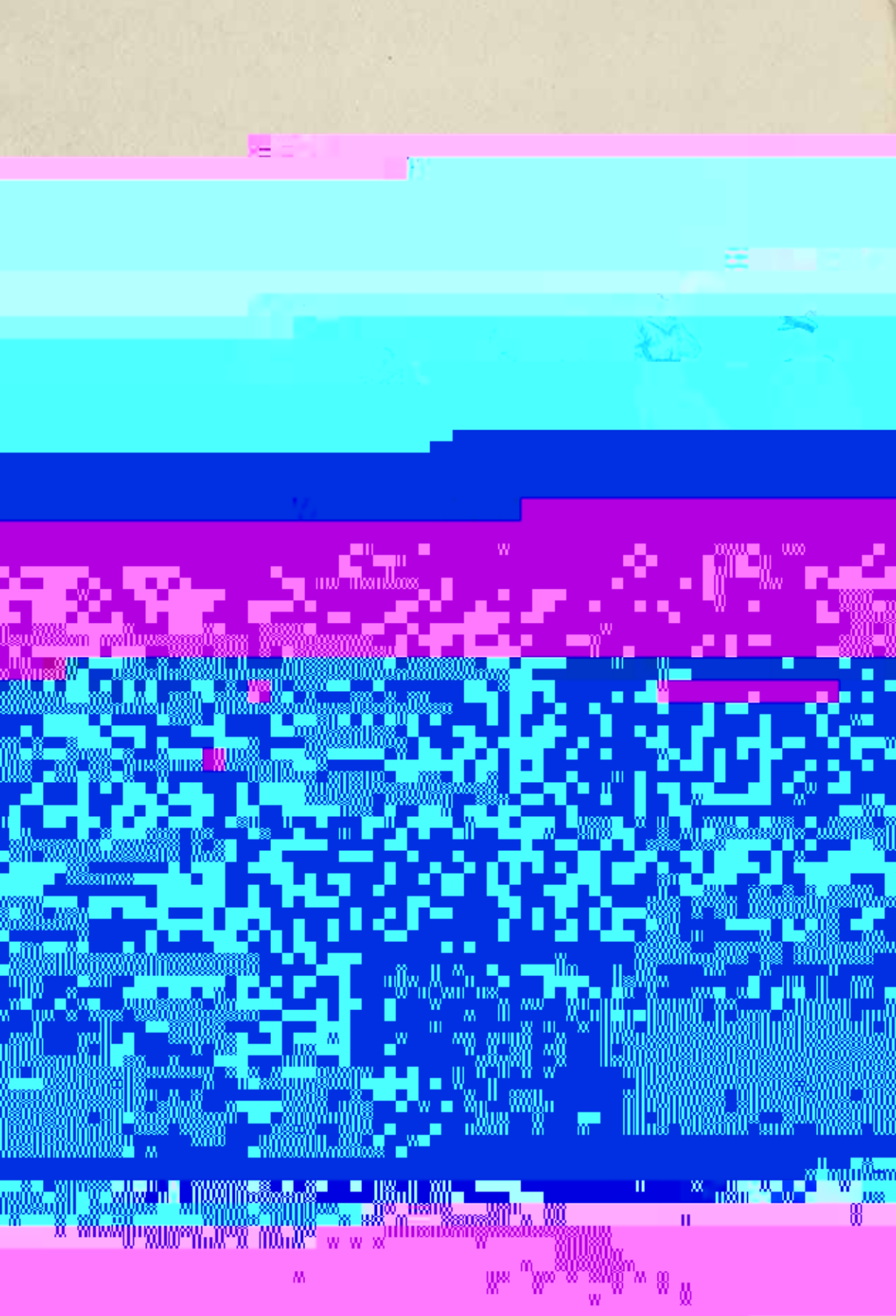
NURSING HISTORY NOW

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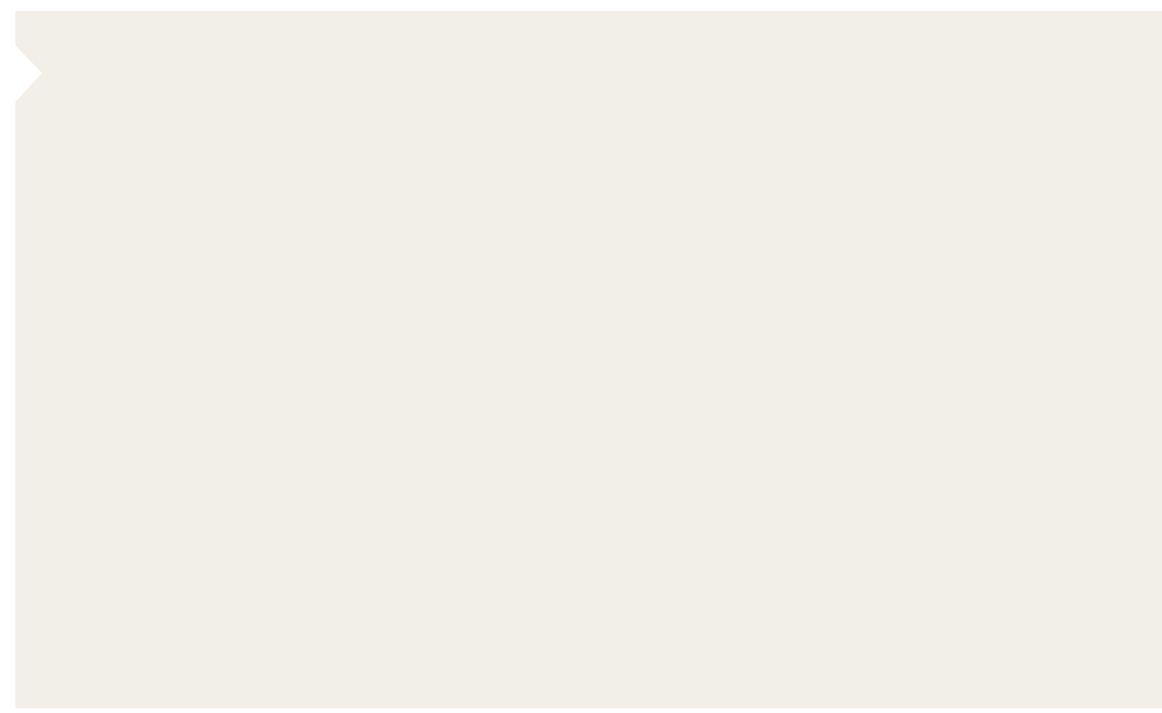


Nursing and storytelling in the First World War.

The RCN Library and Archives Service has launched a new website –

– that uncovers the memories, experiences and achievements of nurses working in the Great War.

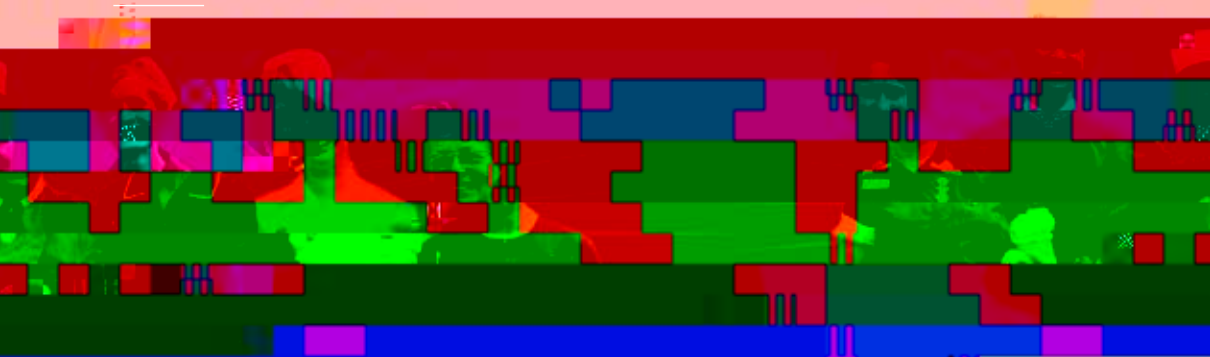
Despite being a vital part of the war, the



The

The NHS Nurses 70: how it came about and the first 40 years

In the first of a two-part series, Dianne Yarwood reflects from a personal perspective on the first 40 years of the NHS as it celebrates this momentous anniversary



1940's

1948



1950's

1952

1960's

1958

1961

1962

My maternal grandparents lived and worked in the South Wales mining valleys and as a child I was made aware of the local charismatic MP, Aneurin Bevan, and his great achievement: the NHS.

It has been argued that the model for the NHS was inspired by his awareness of the Tredegar Workmen's Medical Aid Society, where free health and dental care was available to its members for the payment of a penny a week.

In Britain the interwar years saw high unemployment, widespread poverty, poor health and high infant mortality. By 1945 the infrastructure was in a poor state, hospitals had suffered bomb damage and there was a significant shortage of nursing staff. Against this background, the Government published a white paper on a national health service.

The winter of 1947/8 was extreme and severe, yet in January of 1948 Aneurin Bevan, who was the Minister for Health and Housing at that time, announced that on 5 July the National Health Service would be launched. In those six months the introduction of the NHS was resisted in parliament and by doctors and dentists who feared a loss of freedom and independence. Charles Hill, known as the BBC's Radio Doctor, broadcast his

opposition to the introduction of a state-run medical service.

However, not all doctors – or nurses – were against the NHS and many joined the Socialist Medical Association (SMA), which actively campaigned in its favour. Avis Hutt, an RCN member from 1935 until her death in 2010, was a radical activist and member of the SMA. She recalled being concerned about dismissal if the hospital had known that she was engaged in any form of political activity.

As the implementation date grew closer, community doctors began to advertise for patients and with just five weeks to go the British Medical Association finally ended its resistance. Efforts were made to persuade Bevan to delay the implementation, but the launch date went ahead as planned.

My brother was born just 10 weeks after the beginning of the NHS and my mother was heard to say: "I had to pay for our Dianne, but John came free!" However, that free service only remained truly comprehensive for a short time. The budget of 1951 reduced NHS funding and resulted in Bevan resigning, and in 1952 charges were introduced for prescriptions, spectacles and dental services.

There had been warnings of chaos and extreme abuse of the system, but those fears did not manifest. Instead, although there was very high demand, patients were now able to have the treatment they were previously unable to afford. The costs of the NHS were always higher than predicted but health improved, infant mortality reduced and life expectancy increased. However, as of 1956 there was ongoing underfunding of the service.

Throughout the 1960s – despite long waiting lists, unrest by medical staff over pay and conditions and a cumbersome bureaucracy – the service continued to have widespread support. The decade also saw the creation of district general hospitals, the restructuring of social services and in 1968 the creation of the Department of Health and Social Security.

As a student nurse at the end of that decade, the hospital beds were always full, there was no shortage of equipment or resources, the food for staff and patients was freshly prepared and the majority of hands-on nursing care was delivered by student nurses.

The 1970s have been described as "halcyon days" for the NHS, a time of increased spending, of expansion and an increase in the medical consultant base. But nurses and ancillary staff were threatening strike action over low pay and were awarded a 22% increase after the RCN's campaign.

In April 1974 the NHS was re-organised with the aim of providing a fully integrated local health service. New layers of bureaucracy were introduced but it was not the solution hoped

for and by 1979 the complexities of the NHS "defied solution".

The RCN became increasingly political, industrial disputes ranged across the NHS, nurses' pay remained an issue and in 1974 the Halsbury review resulted in an average increase of 33%. I was undertaking the sister tutors diploma course at that time, released for a two-year full-time course on full salary. On completing the course and effectively being promoted, I saw a 50% increase in my salary.

The 1980s was a decade of radical change, with the introduction of "general management" and the restructuring of the NHS. The decade was also marked by the introduction of the "Nightingale" award for nursing excellence.

The decade ended

with the

Nurses on their break relaxing in the hospital grounds, c1985

While it is generally accepted that he organised district nursing as introduced by William Rathbone, his isn't in fact the whole picture and not all the existing organisations were allied with the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses. York, for example, had its own established nursing institution, the York Home for Nurses, which provided free nursing in the homes of the sick poor, but specialised nurses. Former Director of the Queen's Nursing Institute (QNI) Rosemar Cook shares a glimpse into the history of his forgoing institution.

The York Home for Nurses was established in 1870 by the Dean of York, Dean Duncombe. The home provided private nursing services and used the income from this to provide free nursing for the "sick poor" of the city. Nurses from the home were sent out to hospitals, as well as to individual patients. The annual report of 1895 showed the home's coverage to span from Northumberland to Cornwall, and Lincolnshire to Ireland. Some nurses also went abroad with their patients.

At this time, when district nursing was still at its beginnings and infectious diseases rife, the nurses were at significant risk. A grave in York cemetery holds the remains of three of the home's nurses, and one of the sisters. But the district nurses made a big difference to the health of the poorest families in York. In 1902, Dr Norman Goode, Assistant Medical Officer of Health for the city, wrote:

Unifying district nursing

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As part of its centenary celebrations in 2016, the RCN organised to have a blue plaque installed commemorating one of its founders Dame Sidney Browne at her Cheltenham home. RCN Librarian and Archives Manager Teresa Doherter reflects on the importance of the occasion.

Sidney Browne (1850-1941) was one of the RCN's founding members, alongside Sarah Swift with whom she worked during the war. She was also integral in setting up its first Council and was the first Honorary Treasurer of the College as well as the inaugural President.

Born into a medical family in Kent in 1850, Browne chose to go into nursing after attending a series of lectures given by the pioneering district nurse Florence Lees. She served across the globe as part of the Army Nursing Service, and was given many accolades and awards for her contributions. She became Matron-in-Chief of the Mater Hospital, Dublin. She was also the first woman to be elected President of the RCN in 1927.



Lady Sybil Grey : Empire, War and Revolution

By Simon Board
Harlow Publishing Ltd

Dianne Yarwood offers a glimpse into Simon Board's book, concerning Lady Sybil Grey's experiences in the Anglo-Russian Hospital in Peograd.

This detailed and compelling book draws upon personal diaries, letters and the family archive collection to tell the life story of the author's remarkable grandmother, Lady Sybil Grey.

It is written in three parts: her early life, the First World War and her final 40 years as wife and mother.

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Lady Sybil Grey

