

The Historical Collections of the Royal College of Nursing

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The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Archives was established with the appointment of an archivist to the Library staff in 1986. The records of the organisation extend back beyond its establishment in 1916 to the late nineteenth century when the need for a College was still under discussion.

The Archives rapidly grew from modest beginnings in the RCN's London Library to a distinct department in the new (in 1994) building of the RCN's Scottish headquarters. Since then we have developed a thriving enquiries service, run conferences, created an oral history collection, assisted researchers from all over the world and generally promoted the history of nursing to all.

We have publicly accessible historical collections spanning over a century of nursing. The Archives promotes research and education. We aim to preserve the records and raise the profile of all fields of nursing history. This includes mental health, district nursing, occupational health, midwifery, surgery, paediatrics and a wide range of related topics in social, military and union history.

Our principal collections include:

- Records of the RCN
- Records of nursing organisations: some no longer exist; others simply have no facility to care for their own archives.
- Personal records donated by nurses and their families

- The Oral History Collection containing interviews with nurses working as far back as WW1
- Photographic images of the RCN, nurses and hospitals from the late nineteenth century onwards
- An extensive nursing badge and medal collection
- Library material which has become 'historical', including books, pamphlets, theses and journals over 25 years old.

The British Journal of Nursing. July 6, 1915

NURSING AND THE WAR.

On Saturday last week the Royal Red Cross awarded to Miss L. V. Houghton, late Matron of Guy's Hospital, was presented to her in Duane Road, G.E.C., with the King's approval, in the little Surrey village where she is slowly recovering from her very serious illness. Her Majesty also, through Duane Road, expressed great regret that Miss Houghton was unable to attend a public demonstration being to her continued illness. Everyone will want to congratulate Miss Houghton on this distinction, and will wish that before long she may be restored to health and be able to fulfil her wish of paying a visit to her many friends in Ireland, as she is still interested in their nursing activities.

Miss L. Jolley, R.N.C., went recently Matron of the Royal Southern Hospital, Liverpool, and who has done good service in France in G.A.I.N.S.R., upon the beginning of the war, has been appointed Matron-in-Chief of the Air Service. Miss Jolley is highly qualified, and her colleagues will wish her well in this new and interesting work.

Miss N. McKenna was recommended for the R.N.C. by General Alcock. She has been a member of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Nursing Service (Reserve) since October 1914. Since McKenna has been on service since August 1915, and was mentioned in General Murray's despatches in June last. We are indebted to the courtesy of the Editor of The Scots Fournal, Glasgow, for permission to reproduce Miss McKenna's portrait and for the text of the block. We have many devoted readers in home and abroad who are interested in the recognition of the fine national work of their compatriots.

ASPECTS OF THE V.A.D. QUESTION.

We have some interesting touch with several instances of late-arriving young conscripted V.A.D.s—each had to be taken into their own and easy and uncontrolled work—in charge of

they also are of men of all types—should be more carefully supervised.

An Marlborough Police Court recently Peggy Robertson, aged twenty-two, was charged with possessing a munition at Countess Street, Hyde Park, to be used for improper purposes.

The prisoner, in evidence, said that the officer who had called at the mansionette were friends whose acquaintance she had made during the two years she was acting as a V.A.D. nurse in Egypt and elsewhere.

The young girl was found (as with the alternative of her work imprisonment) and she was ordered to pay five guineas bail.

We have always condemned the practice of the authorities sending young unmarried girls to work in military hospitals abroad. We hope that both the War Office and the Joint War Committee will make it impossible for girls of twenty-one and under to be subjected to the temptations to which Peggy Robertson evidently succumbed.

In the Times recently Dr. Wigmore extolled the value of short-time service in hospital work, and said 200 members of the Marlborough V.A.D. were able to run a hospital for soldiers with only one trained nurse on duty. We wonder when this infernal professional was supposed to be off duty, if she ever went to bed, and who "ran" the hospital in her absence. Let us hope there were no "run" consequences.

Anyway medical practitioners in a vast amount of hospital discharging the value of skilled nursing where war sick and wounded men are concerned. We could well that Dr. Wigmore was on duty night and day in charge of the untrained women, moving in and out of a hospital—perhaps he might then appreciate the sorry and disorganisation of such a system.

A DAY OF PRAYER.

The King desires that August 1, the fourth anniversary of the war, shall be observed with special solemnity as a national day of prayer.

Current Projects

An innovative approach to the history of nursing has led to projects such as the establishment of the UK Centre for the History of Nursing & Midwifery in 2000 (currently based at the School of Nursing and Social Work, University of Manchester). The RCN is a co-founder of the Centre and has a UK wide research network.

One of our main projects in the last few years has been the Historical Nursing Journals Project, focusing on the RCN's extensive Historical Nursing Journals Collection.

Background to the HNJ Project

The Historical Nursing Journals Collection (HNJ) contains 108 (English language) journal titles from around the world presenting a unique portrait of nursing from the late nineteenth century. This is an excellent research resource for the history of the evolution and development of nursing as a profession.

The Nursing Record was one of the first nursing journals to be published in the UK. It ran from 1888-1956, during which it changed its name to *The British Journal of Nursing*. Articles from *Nursing Record/British Journal of Nursing* contain information on hospitals, wards, staffing, disease and case profiles, medical and nursing practice, equipment and events. Typically the journals also contain letters, reports, obituaries, advertisements and photographs relating to all aspects of nursing.

The journals are also a rare and untapped source for interdisciplinary research in women's history, religion, colonialism, military history, philanthropy, social and economic history, ethnicity and culture.

The main concern of any archive is how to increase accessibility, whilst permanently preserving the historical resource. The RCN Archives wanted to fulfil this remit by making our valuable journal resource more widely available.

A successful funding application was made to the Wellcome Trust's Research Resources in Medical History scheme, based on the delivery of online access to the *Nursing Record/British Journal of Nursing* within 2 years.

The project was based on three criteria:

- Access

Only two complete runs of the *Nursing Record/British Journal of Nursing* are known to be accessible to the public, one at the British Library in London and the other at the RCN Archives in Edinburgh. Having journals available electronically through a website ensures that researchers worldwide can have free access.

- Preservation

Preservation is of primary concern. The Historical Journals Collection is heavily used and the demand for photocopies has always been high. Some of the volumes are over 100 years old and many are now in an extremely fragile condition. The Project ensures that the actual journals are not put under any additional strain. Users can now browse the volumes virtually and download or print out their own copies from the website.

- Promotion of research resource

Increasing knowledge of the journals and their research potential will generate a greater interest in the history of nursing. The fact that Historical Nursing

Journals are accessible and free to all researchers cannot fail to make an impact on the quantity and quality of research. It will also open up the history of nursing to interdisciplinary study.

Technical Development & Delivery

The journals were scanned by Document Scanning and Electronic Archiving Specialists, *Capture All Limited*. The camera used was a Bookeye Planetary Scanner, which is able to scan bound volumes without causing damage to the spine. It has nine different focus points, and is able to take an image of the volume while it is open in its natural V-shape. An 'automatic book-fold recognition' feature corrects any distortion. The scanned images were then processed through OCR (Optical Character Recognition) software to allow full text searches to be performed on the content of the individual pages.

Alchemy software is currently in use for web delivery. Alchemy Premium was used for the building, maintaining and managing of the databases and images and Alchemy Web Server was used to publish the databases and images via the web. The project provides only page images to the users. While OCR text files are used to facilitate full-text searching, they are not visible. An image-based approach ensures the integrity of the materials in the database, while also retaining the 'appearance' of the journals in their original presentation.

This Historical Nursing Journals Project reached completion in September 2003. The entire run of 103 volumes (approximately 50,000 single page images) has been digitised and they are available online in fully searchable format.

Using the Website

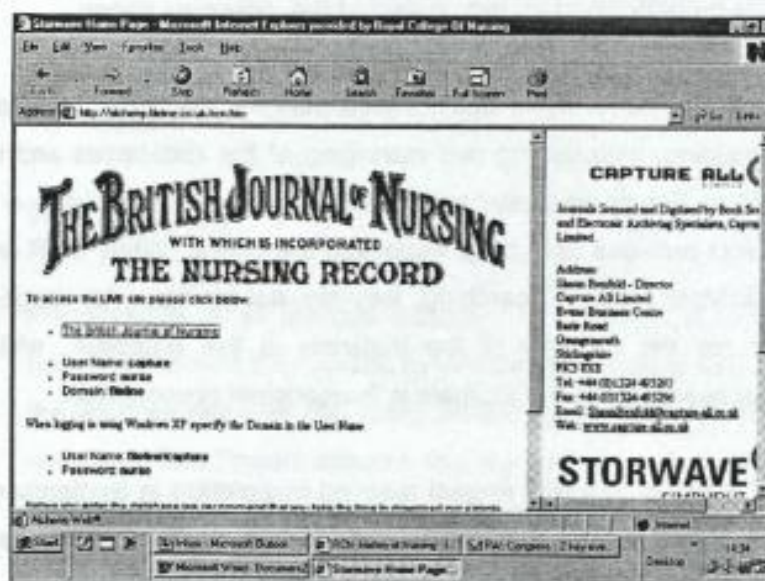
The Historical Nursing Journals website can be found at www.rcn.org.uk/historicalnursingjournals. The website front end is located within

the RCN's website, although the images are located on an independent server hosted by Storwave. The HNJ 'postcard' image on the RCN History of Nursing webpage is a hyperlink, which takes the user to the database of pdf images. Before the login appears the user will see a copyright statement on screen.

- Logging in

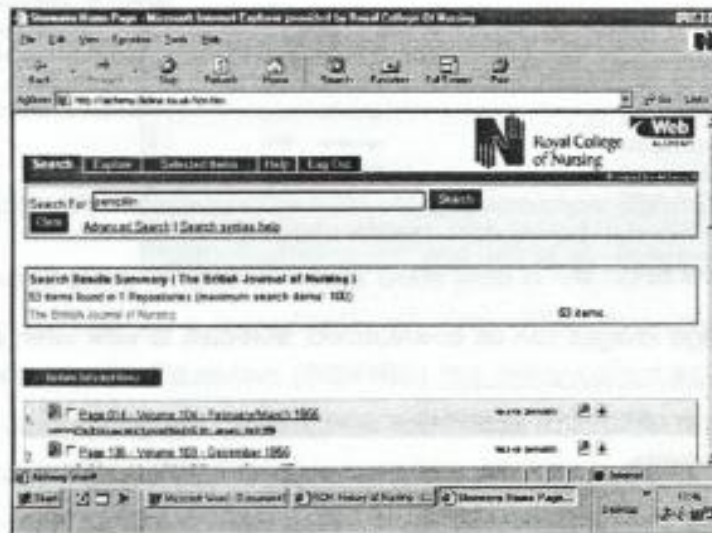
When users subsequently click on the *British Journal of Nursing* link, a login box will appear and users will be prompted to enter the passwords provided (User Name: capture; Password: nurse; Domain: fileline). Windows XP users (User Name: fileline\capture; Password: nurse).

Users will then be taken directly to the simple search screen within the database.



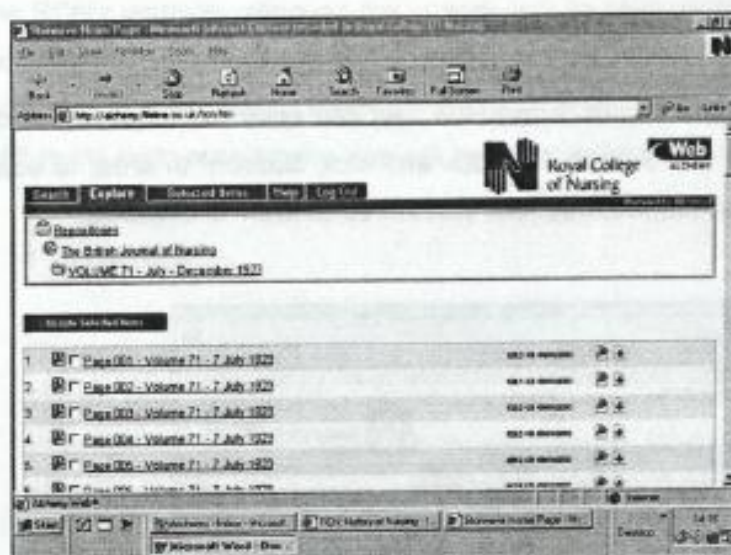
- Searching

From the simple search screen the user can enter the required search word or phrase in the 'Search For' box and click 'Search' in order to search the contents of all the volumes. An 'Advanced Search' is available.



Search results are displayed as a list of pdf's which represent pages from particular volumes with their dates. Users can view a pdf-image of any of the pages listed by simply clicking on the link.

If users want to browse a volume from a particular year or a particular issue within a volume they can click on the 'Explore' tab. The user then needs to click on [British Journal of Nursing](#). This will provide a list of all the volume pdf available. Users can click on a volume and view the page pdf files.



On-screen page images can be downloaded, selected to view later, printed or emailed.

Future developments

The creation of this website has highlighted a previously unseen need for historical nursing publications online. Users have welcomed this project with a great wealth of comments, suggestions and encouragement.

In response to user feedback, our staff are keen to continue to develop and improve the website to meet their needs. The user log in process is complex and will be removed when the site is updated within the next year. We also hope to streamline access and improve navigability by enhancing search capabilities, introducing more intuitive functions and incorporating dedicated help features.

We also hope to add more historical nursing journal titles to the site as and when funding allows.

For further information please contact the Archives on archives@rcn.org.uk