

RCN Forum Annual Report 2023

Forum:

History of Nursing Forum (HoNF)

Introduction:

The History of Nursing Forum (HoNF) aims to protect, preserve, share and cherish nursing's heritage and support and promote member interest in the history of nursing. It welcomes any member of the RCN with an interest in the history of nursing.

Committee changes:

During the year three members of the committee stepped down: two citing the pressure of work as reasons for resignation. This seems to be a common problem across a number of forums and the RCN should review ways in which those committee members who are in employment can be supported. The committee regrets the loss of valuable colleagues and would like to thank Sarah Rogers, Tamsin Smith and Liz Williams for their contribution to the work of the HoNF.

The committee would like to thank our colleague, Margaret Graham, who retires from the committee after eight years, for her contribution to the work of the committee and the forum. At the 2018 Congress Margaret gained the RCN Award of Merit for her work. Margaret has coordinated the Northern Ireland History of Nursing Network for many years, building a community of members who share their love of history but also provide support to each other. She led the group to produce the books *Nurses Voices from the Northern Ireland Troubles* and *Nurses' Voices from WW1 – the Northern Ireland Connection*. Margaret was instrumental in the creation of the BBC television documentary: *Nurses on the Frontline*. During her time on the committee Margaret has led our online Wikipedia group, *Nurses in Red*, which supports members to write entries on the history of nursing. In August Margaret Graham joined our Head of Archives Teresa Doherty in Belfast to speak at the Archives and Records Association of UK and the Republic of Ireland, on the theme of community. They shared how HONF and RCN Staff collaborate with members across the UK. We wish Margaret all the best for the future.

Stuart Wildman has stepped down, at the end of his period of appointment, having been Chair of the committee since January 2020. Stuart led on the five-year Oxford Dictionary of National Biography project; advising on which nurses should be included and suggesting suitable authors. He actively contributed to the 'Learning Disability' and 'Unmasked' exhibitions. Stuart also led the forum during COVID, and the committee want to thank Stuart for his commitment and support through this challenging time. Stuart helped the Library and Archive team with the move of events online, chairing many sessions, and encouraging members with a passion for history of nursing to keep in contact and involved.

There were five vacancies for 2024. Three applications were received and all three members were shortlisted and appointed to serve until December 2027. We welcome Vari Drennan, Janet Hargreaves and Dianne Yarwood, who bring a wealth of experience to the committee.

Membership of the Forum:

Membership has stagnated and now stands at 2,349 members with 601 who have chosen HoNF as their first choice. This represents an increase of one more member than last year and nine less choosing HoNF as their first-choice forum, as compared to last year. This still entitles the forum to have one delegate at Congress. This is disappointing and the committee will consider setting a goal to increase membership of the forum in the coming year.

Achievements in 2023: (Outputs and outcomes)

HoNF members continue to be active in nursing history, as well as contributing to other UK and international history of nursing networks. Several members of the forum attended and gave papers at the UK Association for the History of Nursing's annual Research Colloquium in Chichester in July 2023. The Northern Ireland network has continued its project on nurses from across Ireland who served in World War Two. The London and Southeast Group continued to have a full programme of meetings using Zoom.

RCN Bulletin Articles

HONF's contribution of articles for the online RCN Bulletin were severely curtailed in 2023, due to the RCN's need to share information about industrial action. Two new articles were submitted in the year, one on the NHS 75th anniversary and one which is pending publication. The total number of unique page views of the NHS story was 3,243 (up until Friday 17 November). Members of the committee and established historians contribute to this initiative, which will be reviewed at the forum's strategy day. The committee would like to thank Tamsin Smith for coordinating this aspect of our work over the last two years.

Tracing Nurses Guide

This free guide to RCN members and the general public has been updated and can be found on the forum website. Stuart Wildman, Margaret Graham and Sarah Rogers worked with Teresa Doherty to review and amend the guide. Feedback indicates that this is a very useful resource for those trying to trace individual nurses from the past. [Tracing nurses | Blogs | Royal College of Nursing \(rcn.org.uk\)](#)

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford DNB) Project

The project to increase the number of nurses in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography has been successful with a further ten biographies written, some by members of the forum. These are made up of a mixture of nineteenth and twentieth century nurses who made a significant contribution to nursing and to national life. For the first time a learning disability

nurse, Alan Parish, is included in the dictionary and roughly half of the nurses have a direct association with the Royal College of Nursing. The majority will be published in early 2024 along with an introduction written by Stuart Wildman. The biography of Daphne Steele, the first black nurse to be appointed a matron in the NHS and written by Claire Chatterton, was published in October 2023 as part of Black History Month. This initiative will increase the numbers of nurses in the Dictionary to over eighty. The Oxford DNB can be accessed in most local and academic libraries online.

British Library Web Archive: Nursing Collection in the UK

In 2021 the British Library, at the instigation of the forum, launched the Nursing Collection in their UK Web Archive <https://www.webarchive.org.uk/en/ukwa/collection/3085>. As of October 2023, we have 328 websites and twitter accounts listed in the online Nursing Collection. We started in December 2021, with 138; this rose to 246 by June 2022; and 256 sites in the collection by December 2022. Typical inclusions are websites or twitter accounts from: specialist nursing groups, nursing campaign groups, groups representing nursing staff from a particular country or heritage, history of nursing groups, groups related to defence nursing, and nursing sites by individuals. Websites are focused on nursing in the UK. We particularly want to represent the diversity of the nursing profession, the breadth of specialisms, locations, care settings, experiences, and diversity of individuals who comprise the nursing workforce. We will review the sites that have been collected and will nominate additional UK nursing websites in 2024. Dionne Daniel leads this aspect of the work, in conjunction with Teresa Doherty our professional lead.

***'Nurses in Red'* Wikipedia project**

Our Wikipedia project has been co-ordinated by Margaret Graham. This is titled '*Nurses in Red*' as people or places with no uploaded content on the site are coloured red whilst those with information are in blue. The aim of this project is to make nurses and nursing more visible on Wikipedia thereby promoting nursing history and professional nursing to a wider audience. In November our Nurses in Red group was invited to speak at the annual UK Wikimedians online conference. Sarah Rogers joined the conference and spoke on behalf of the group. A few days before the event we were delighted to discover Nurses in Red was nominated for an award – alongside Edinburgh University; Mixed Museum; Kahlili Collections at Edinburgh Uni; and the National institute for Health and Care Research. We were even more delighted to discover we had won their Partnership of the Year Award. They were impressed by our commitment as a community of practice to rectify the invisibility of nursing in Wikipedia. We intend the trophy to visit the four-country headquarters so it can be 'shared' by our UK-wide group.

The project initially recruited ten members of the forum including one student, Chelsea Bell. Chelsea has written a blog about her experience of researching and writing a biography about Kathleen Robb a prominent matron in Northern Ireland.



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Articles Created

213

Articles Edited

878

Total Edits

14

Editors

55.8K

Words Added

871^①

References Added

4.41M

Article Views

20^①

Commons Uploads

Follow-up meetings occur monthly via 'Teams.' The group have been surprised at the lack of nurses, especially past matrons, mentioned on hospital history sites and plan to slowly rectify this and also upload biographies of deceased RCN Fellows and other significant nurses. In addition, the correction of inaccurate information is also a priority. This is a very exciting project which offers all those who engaged a new set of IT skills. To date the work has been very successful with 11 new articles added, 213 existing articles edited, 58,800 words added and 871 new references included. There has been a staggering 4.4 million views of these articles so far.

A second cohort of members was trained in September of this year. We now have 14 active editors with some additional members preparing to volunteer for Wikipedia editing. The group meets online on the first Monday of each month, 13:00-14:00, when we are joined by Wikipedia expert Alice White from the Wellcome Library. HoNF member Sarah Rogers was invited to speak at the online UK Wikipedia Community Conference in November, outlining how our *Nurses in Red* group is developing, as this is seen as a fresh and innovative approach.

Oral History project

Our ongoing work in interviewing nurses, especially RCN Fellows, for our oral history project was paused during the pandemic. This was reviewed at the 2022 Annual Strategy Day meeting and a small subcommittee (Liz Williams, Dionne Daniel & Sarah Rogers) was formed to discuss the resumption of the project. Funding for paying expenses to interviewers has been secured for 2023 and a small number of interviews will go ahead coordinated by Dianne Yarwood. A further application for funding will be submitted for 2024.

Events and Exhibitions:

The forum works closely with the RCN Library and Archives Service to organise events and exhibitions, to disseminate research and information on the history of nursing and to promote the RCN collections. This also provides a good opportunity to work with other forums to showcase both historical aspects of nursing and up to date practice. Our well-established pattern of launching a new exhibition, and associated events series, every spring and autumn has resumed with the 'Unmasked' exhibition launched in the spring and the and 'Children and Young People' in November 2023. Our Children and Young People exhibition has used a new format with volunteers from across HONF and CYPF being invited to contribute through a series of workshops. This proved very successful and we will develop this format in the future. Nicola Ring represented the committee on the planning team and actively contributed to this exhibition. Online versions of exhibitions from previous years are still available to view and are still attracting interest.

Attendance at hybrid events, that is simultaneously online and in person, continues. The launch of the ‘Unmasked’ and ‘Children and Young People’ exhibitions followed this format. This enables the forum to invite international speakers to present their research and to involve an international audience in our programme. The forum annual lecture by Helen Rappaport on Mary Seacole was, to date, the most successful presentation of 2023. All events have been attended by members and non-members. Members of the Steering Committee have chaired some of these events:

Event	Date	Attendees	% Member Attendees	% Public Attendees
History of Nursing Annual Lecture: Mary Seacole	29/3/2023	189	50%	50%
Nursing Beyond Borders: Mary Abbott Launch	28/4/2023	24	43%	57%
Unmasked Exhibition launch	11/5/2023	60	37%	63%
A Duty to Care	7/6/2023	72	63%	37%
In Conversation with Nursing Pioneers: Children's Health	28/6/2023	34	63%	37%
At the Heart of the Nation: Migration and the NHS	4/7/2023	87	28%	72%
Medicine, Politics, Emotions	20/7/2023	50	52%	48%

Following discussions between Sally Bassett, Chair of the Forums Chairs Committee, Sarah Chaney, Events and Exhibition Manager and Stuart Wildman a bid has been submitted to the Arts Council to create an exhibition around the theme of ‘What is a Nurse?’ If successful, this will be staged in the main exhibition space in the College Library. Members from a number of forum committees have expressed an interest in being involved.

Social Media:



HoNF continues to have a social media presence on X (Twitter) using [#histnursing](#) and a [Facebook](#) group. The Facebook group stands at 183 members, up 8% on the previous year. We have 292 followers on X. The Facebook page has been maintained by members of the committee (Stuart Wildman and Dionne Daniel). Dionne coordinates our presence on X (Twitter). As well as this, there are regular blogs relating to wider history events and issues, which can be accessed from the [HoNF Webpage](#) again these blogs are maintained by the

HoNF committee and each member is expected to write one blog during the year. There have been four blogs published this year, so far. The committee would like to thank Liz Williams for coordinating this aspect of our work over the last year.

Plans for 2024:

The submission date for this report has come before committee members could discuss and finalise plans for 2024 at the annual strategy day. Actions and plans will be discussed and agreed on 30/11/23. These will address the forthcoming exhibitions concerned with support workers and prison nursing as well as the resumption of the oral history project, the expansion of the Wikipedia project, further articles for the RCN Bulletin and blogs on the HoNF web pages. In addition the committee will seek to increase the involvement of forum members in the coming year.

Finally, the committee would like to thank Teresa Doherty, Denise Alexis and the exhibitions and events team for their effort and continued support in the work and success of the forum.

Date Prepared: 21 November 2023

By: Stuart Wildman (Dr) Chair HoNF