

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.

1922-1943

Nurse registration in the UK began on 30 September 1921. The General Nursing Council maintained the register which was divided into 5 parts:

- General (reserved for female nurses)
- Fever Nurses
- Male Nurses
- Mental Nurses
- Sick Children's Nurses

Qualified nurses paid to be on the register and existing nurses had until 1923 to join. It was voluntary to join the register until the Nurses Act 1943. In 1943, nurses who had qualified before July 1925 had one last opportunity to register. After 1943, it was compulsory to join the register. Nurses who maintained their membership were published year on year. It wasn't until the 1950's that only newly qualified nurses were published.

Registration records include the following information:

- Full name
- Registration date
- Address (at that time)
- Place and date of qualification

Step 1: General Nursing Council Registers (State Registered Nurses)

You can find the following GNC registers at the RCN via Ancestry:

1. GNC England & Wales Register of Nurses, 1922-68
2. GNC Scotland Register of Nurses, 1945-48, 1948 supplement, 1950, 1955 and 1957-67.
3. GNC Ireland Register of Nurses, 1939, 1943 and 1945-48.
4. JNMC Northern Ireland Register of Nurses, 1943, 1946, 1949, 1951, 1956 and 1959

You can also find registers at the following locations:

GNC England and Wales Register

1. The National Archives: Full run (1922-1973)
2. Cambridge University Library: Full run
3. Oxford Libraries Online: Full run

4. Wellcome Library: Registers 1930-44, 46-47 and supplementary registers 1948-50
5. The British Library: Registers 1922-68
6. National Library of Ireland: Registers 1930-68

GNC Scotland Register

1. National Records Scotland: Full run (1921-1983) Note: Access restricted until 75 years after the date created

GNC Ireland Register

1. University College Dublin: Full Run (1921-1985) UCD have produced the following guide to their records:

University College Dublin (2008) An Bord Altranais Archives, Dublin: University College Dublin

JNMC Northern Ireland

1. Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI): Full Run (1922-1983)

Step 2: Health visitors

GNC Scotland Register of Health Visitors

You can find records for Scottish Health Visitors (1933-83) at the National Records Scotland. The reference you will need is: **GNC14**

Further reading

Robins, J. (2000) Nursing and Midwifery in Ireland in the Twentieth Century. Fifty Years of An Bord Altranais (The Nursing Board) 1950–2000, Dublin: An Bord Altranais.

- Available for RCN members to borrow from RCN Library Services
<http://rcn.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?bookMark=ePnHCXMw42JgAfZbU5mBH SBLU1BIZ2lgwslgCe37KgC7xwq5mSnloHUbIQqZeQgeoD0bQEEgE9jiUSgpBy2SSS3JUEiGFLrcD HJuriHOHrpFyXnx0CGN-EyE2UYEFQAAj8YsNQ>

Bendall, E. (1969) A history of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, 1919-1969, London: Lewis.

- Available for RCN members to borrow from RCN Library Services
http://rcn.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?bookMark=ePnHCXMw42JgAfZbU5IBPW RDC2B1Cmx_cDJ4OSpAzs-tVMhPUwA2bRSgpyorQDvFCqAt2MmZOQrAppoC9P4KBRAOB5aTxToKwG6FpYlu6CwXbgY5N9cQZw_douS8eOgYR3wmwjlggoADXEvLg

Step 3: Other sources of registration

Royal British Nurse's Association (RBNA) (1887-1966)

The RBNA kept the first 'list' of qualified nurses. There are 10,000 nurses on this list held at King's College London Archive. The reference you will need is: **GB0100 GB 0099 KCLCA RBNA** You can make an appointment by visiting the Archive's 'visiting us' webpage:

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/library/collections/archivespec/visiting/index.aspx> You can also find the 1909 list at the RCN via Ancestry:

Queen's Nursing Institute (District Nursing) (1887 -)

We can trace District Nursing back to 1859 when William Rathbone employed Mary Robinson to nurse his wife at home.

- **England and Wales (1887-1997)**

You can find records at the Wellcome library. The reference you will need is: **SA/QNI**. To make an appointment please see: <http://wellcomelibrary.org/using-the-library/>

- **Scotland (1889-)**

You can find records at the RCN Archive, Edinburgh:

http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/library_and_heritage_services/contact_us

- **Ireland (1890-1967)**

You can find records at the Archives of University College Dublin (UCD) The reference you will need is: **P220/28** and you can make an appointment by visiting:

<http://www.ucd.ie/archives/planningyourvisit/> UCD have produced the following guide to their records:

University College Dublin (2008) An Bord Altranais Archives, Dublin: University College Dublin

- [E-resource, view this e-resource:](#)

Royal Medico-Psychological Association (1891 - 1951)

The Royal Medico-Psychological Association trained and registered Mental Nurses or Attendants. You can find records at the Royal College of Psychiatrists:

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/usefulresources/thecollegearchives.aspx>

London County Council Handbooks (1909-1939)

The London County Council (LCC), now the Corporation of London, included the Metropolitan Asylums Board (MAB) and employed nurses across the city. You can find records for nurses in the annual LCC staff and general services handbook (1909-39) at the London Metropolitan Archive:

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/london-metropolitan-archives/visitor-information/Pages/default.aspx> The reference you will need is: **LCC**

College of Nursing membership records (RCN) (1916-1923)

The Royal College of Nursing published one volume of membership records for the period 1916-1923. The volume gives each member's name, joining date, address and qualification and is available at the RCN via Ancestry.

Scottish early nursing registers

You can find the following lists of nurses pre-dating the state registration of nurses at the National Archives of Scotland:

- **HH2/33** Local Government Board (Scotland). Register of trained sick nurses appointed to poorhouse institutions (1905-1927)
- **HH2/34** Scottish Board of Health. Register of trained sick nurses appointed to poorhouses institutions (1906-1930)
- **HH2/35** Scottish Board of Health. Index to register of trained nurses (1885 – 1930)
- **HH2/36** Scottish Board of Health. Special register of certificated nurses (1907 – 1923)

Further Reading

McGann, S. (2009) A history of the Royal College of Nursing 1916-90: a voice for nurses, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

- E-book (member only) View this e-book
http://www.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/284509/003551.pdf
- Available for RCN members to borrow from RCN Library Services
<http://rcn.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?bookMark=ePnHCXMw42JgAfZbU5khZ9uYA-sbc3NL8C2IwJoKfNSJJSeDoaMC5DjdSoX8NAVgS0cB3FIWgHaWQYLQzrIcsD9hpgsqMaXcXEOcPXSLkvPioSMb8YnGoP4J6N5bPJIAmHonuA>

Queen's Nursing Institute. (2012) QNI 125: celebrating 125 years of the Queen's Nursing Institute, London: QNI.

- Available for RCN members to borrow from RCN Library Services
<http://rcn.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?bookMark=ePnHCXMw42JgAfZbU5khZ9uAJv-BScjSkJOBpdDPu8EQdCW1IjtriLOHblFyXjx0jCl-ORjcEjbCKwkAr6EW2Q>

Step 4: Nurses Leagues (1899)

St. Bartholomew's formed the first nurses' league in 1899. The league would publish a regular magazine or have a website for alumni to keep in touch. When nurse training became a degree based course, some leagues became university alumni associations. To find out if a hospital had a nurses' league, see:

http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_st=adv&_dss=range&_hb=oth&_q=nurses+league

You can find the Guy's Hospital Nurses' League: register of Guy's nurses (1937) at the RCN via Ancestry

Further Reading

Use this subject search for details of books the RCN libraries hold on nurses leagues:

[http://rcn.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?ho=t&fvf=ContentType,Book%20%2F%20eBook,f%7CLanguage,English,f&l=en&q=\(nurses%20league\)](http://rcn.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?ho=t&fvf=ContentType,Book%20%2F%20eBook,f%7CLanguage,English,f&l=en&q=(nurses%20league))

Step 6: Midwifery

- **England and Wales**

The Midwives Act, 1902 mandated the state enrolment of midwives. Midwives had to enrol with the new Central Midwives Board (CMB) by 1910. You can find the CMB England & Wales Roll of Midwives 1902-83 at the National Archives. The reference you will need is: **DV 7** To visit the National Archives please see: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/visit/>

- **Scotland**

The Midwives Act, 1915 mandated the state enrolment of midwives with the Central Midwives Board, Scotland. You can access the CMB Scotland (1917-68) at the RCN via Ancestry:

- **Ireland**

The Midwives Act, 1918 mandated the state enrolment of midwives with the Central Midwives Board, Ireland. You can find the CMB Ireland Roll of Midwives 1919-85 at University College Dublin (UCD). UCD have produced the following guide to their records:

University College Dublin (2008) An Bord Altranais Archives, Dublin: University College Dublin

- **Northern Ireland**

With the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, the Northern Ireland National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting was established in 1921. You can find the Roll of Midwives 1922-88 at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and the reference you will need is **NBN**. To access the records please see: http://www.proni.gov.uk/index/visiting_proni.htm

Royal College of Midwives

The Midwives Institute (c.1880) now the Royal College of Midwives played a crucial role in the passing of the Act. You can find their membership and certification records at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG). You can access these by contacting the RCOG library: <http://www.rcog.org.uk/content/information-enquiries>

The Royal College of Midwives have produced a guide to searching for Midwifery ancestors that you can access here:

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and The Royal College of Midwives. (2014) Tracing midwives in your family, London: RCOG Heritage.

Further Reading

Borsary, A. (2012) Nursing and midwifery in Britain since 1700, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

- Available for RCN members to borrow from RCN Library Services
http://rcn.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?bookMark=ePnHCXMw42JgAfZbU5khZ9sAG7hGJqAj0sG3IFoamYGmhTgZYF1hBWBvWSE3M6UctlyjUiEzTwHaJVYAyianKoAOj-NmkHJzDXH20C1KzouHjmnEJxoDW_qWoPvV8UgCANVEJpl

Reid, L. (2011) Midwifery in Scotland: A history, Irvine: Scottish history press.

- Available for RCN members to borrow from RCN Library Services
http://rcn.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?bookMark=ePnHCXMw42JgAfZbU5khZ9sAW98mJubmBhacDKK-mSnloOUalQqZeQqg69pBS_e4GaTcXEOcPXSLkvPioSMW8YnGoFPpQIf24pEEAL_fHXw

Fealy, G. (2005) Care to remember: nursing and midwifery in Ireland, Cork: Mercier Press.

- Available for RCN members to borrow from RCN Library Services
<http://rcn.summon.serialssolutions.com/#!/search?bookMark=ePnHCXMw42JgAfZbU5khpylZmAlrNFAdzckgANpQo1CSrwAa9wJddsHNIOfmGuLsoVuUnBcPHaylz4RrAVOIQkABAODjHRM>

Cowell, B and Wainwright, D, (1981) Behind the blue door: the history of the Royal College of Midwives 1881-1981, London: Balliere Tindall.

Step 6: Training or employment 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 7: 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 8: 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=ePnHCXMw42JgAfZbU1nAR9yZABtvZkYcsJLRyMzliJOBf9oPvgBvcuBmkHJzDXH20C1KzouHDInEJwILTWBCM8lrCQBuqRxB>

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_rGp6ngnX1KWXAaAva8P8HAQ&dclid=COetgKXC9MgCFcooFgodwqcOJw