Welcome to this issue of the RCN History of Nursing Society (HoNS) newsletter. It is a great pleasure for me to have taken on the role of editor, and I would like to thank my predecessor Dr Ruth Davies for all her dedication and hard work. I have taken over at a time when interest in nursing history is high and there is so much going on, as reflected in this issue.

The HoNS has worked in collaboration with the RCN Library and Heritage Centre to plan and implement a series of events and exhibitions being held at RCN headquarters in London. More than 220 people attended the first four events and many commented on how moving and beautifully presented they were. Two of the events featured the publication of new books about nursing and nurses during World War One.

Following the opening of the exhibition in August, Christine Hallett delivered the first evening lecture, introducing her new book *Veiled Warriors: Allied Nurses of the First World War*. This compelling and powerful account seeks to cut through the myths and romanticism to show us a picture of highly skilled and committed professional nurses. A review of Christine's book by John Adams was published in *Nursing Standard* on 2 September last year.

In December, Yvonne McEwen spoke about her new book, *In the Company of Nurses: The British Army Nursing Service in the Great War*. This is an authorised history of the British Army nursing service compiled from diaries, journals, official documents and previously unpublished works, telling the story of the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS). The emphasis is also on moving away from the many over-romanticised myths about nursing work. A full review of the book will feature in the next issue of this newsletter.

The exhibition in the nursing history collection on the lower ground floor of the Library and Heritage Centre runs until the end of March. In April an exhibition relating to RCN members who served and died during World War One will take its place. This will be accompanied by a series of free talks and events, to be publicised shortly.

Dianne Yarwood, newsletter editor
New faces

This newsletter has a new co-ordinator because unfortunately Ruth Davies has had to step down from the HoNS steering committee. We are very grateful to Dianne Yarwood for agreeing to take on this important role. We would like to thank Ruth very much for all her hard work as newsletter editor and for all she contributed, including chairing the Monica Baly Award panel and for being my predecessor as HoNS Chair.

We have also been sorry to say goodbye to another member of our steering committee, Rosemary Cook. Like Ruth, Rosemary has been an enthusiastic and hardworking member of the committee and will be much missed. A big thank you to both of them.

We are delighted to welcome two new members to the committee, Dr Jane Brooks and Major Tristan Griffin, and look forward to working with them. Jane, PhD, RN, is a lecturer at the University of Manchester. She teaches across all levels of both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Her research interests include the history of older adult nursing and more recently nursing work in the Second World War. She is deputy director of the UK Centre for the History of Nursing and editor of *The Bulletin* of the UK Association for the History of Nursing. She was also this year’s recipient of the Monica Baly Award so congratulations to her. Tristan, RN (adult and mental health), RNT, has been a lecturer and is currently a manager in a mental health services department. He is a history graduate with a special interest in the contribution to nursing of the original “sisters” of the religious orders. He is also keen to identify current and past outstanding male nurses.

Find out more about the committee at www.rcn.org.uk/hons

Partnering working

The HoNS is always keen to build links with other RCN forums and societies. John Adams and I from the HoNS steering committee have undertaken some joint work with the Mental Health Forum reflecting on the history of mental health nursing. The team has been planning an exhibition which will be in the RCN Library and Heritage centre in London from October 2015, together with a series of events including the launch of a mental health nursing history timeline. We hope to have a joint fringe event at RCN Congress and a launch event around World Mental Health Day on Friday 9 October. More details will follow on the RCN website.

Remembering Edith Cavell

The 100th anniversary of the execution of nurse Edith Cavell falls on 12 October 2015. We have been liaising with the Cavell Trust and the chair of the Norfolk Cavell 2015 Partnership to find out about events that are being planned (www.edithcavell.org.uk). The HoNS hopes to hold an event to complement these but also to remember Nurse Cavell and mark this anniversary.

Edith Cavell worked in Salford, Greater Manchester, between 1906 and 1907 for the Manchester and Salford Sick Poor and Private Nursing Institution as a nurse in one of the Queen’s District Nursing Homes, her last post before moving to Belgium. She is remembered on the war memorial at Sacred Trinity Church in Salford, the church she attended during her time there. We hope to take part in an act of remembrance at the memorial at 11am on 12 October. There will also be two free lectures and coffee/tea provided. Further information will be found on the RCN Library and Heritage Service webpages. Everyone is welcome.

Come to Congress

This year we hope to have another evening fringe event at RCN Congress in Bournemouth in June, about RCN members who died while serving in the First World War – please look out for us and come and join in.

For anyone who has never attended, Congress is a true highlight of the RCN year. The lively debates and discussions are supplemented by a packed programme of events, which all have professional development at their heart. The Congress exhibition showcases a wealth of opportunities and innovations.

RCN Congress 2015 runs from 21 to 25 June at the Bournemouth International Centre. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/congress
RCN centenary approaching fast

The RCN’s centenary falls in 2016 and planning for the anniversary is already underway, with Alison O’Donnell, Dianne Yarwood, Teresa Doherty and Claire Chatterton all involved.

The RCN has been a significant force for nursing since the early 20th century, pioneering the transformation of the profession into a highly skilled career. The centenary will be marked by a year-long celebration, with a programme of events that focuses on the RCN’s heritage, what’s happening now and ways of supporting nursing in the future. There will be opportunities for learning, innovating and simply celebrating this landmark anniversary.

More details are available at www.rcn.org.uk/rcn100

Commemorating World War One

August 2014 saw the launch of our events series and exhibition (*Front Line Nurses: British Nurses of the First World War*) in the nursing history room of the RCN Library and Heritage Centre) to mark the 100th anniversary of the start of the Great War.

We have held four successful events so far at RCN headquarters in London including a study afternoon, *Frontline Nursing: Then and Now*, a joint event with the RCN Defence Nursing Forum, and three evening talks by Christine Hallett, Dick and Lisa Robinson (speaking about his great aunt, Sister Edith Appleton) and Yvonne McEwen. Three further lectures are planned between January and March 2015, including one in Edinburgh. Thanks very much to Sarah Chaney, RCN Audience Engagement Manager, for all her hard work in organising these events.

We have also been pleased that banners (pictured right) have been created, enabling a portable version of the exhibition to be displayed in the libraries at RCN Scotland and RCN Wales.

Wednesday 1 April will see the launch of a new exhibition and lecture series that will run until October 2015. Further details can be found in the “What’s on” area of the RCN Library and Heritage Services website at http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/library_and_heritage_services/whats_on

We would like to put on more events across the UK but the committee does need your help to do this. Many thanks to Verna Phillips, chair of the Isle of Man branch, for offering to help organise and host an event there called *From Shellshock to PTSD*. This will be at Nobles Hospital on Thursday 30 April at 4.45pm. More information will be available soon on the same webpage.

Learning in London

HoNS newsletter editor Dianne Yarwood writes…

The London and South East History of Nursing Group was established nearly 14 years ago and has continued to meet four times a year at RCN headquarters in London. At each meeting there is a presentation from a group member or invited guest on some aspect of nursing history. Over the years we have covered areas as wide ranging as occupational health in Lancashire, the treatment of HIV and Aids, the development of community psychiatric nurses and the life of Edith Cavell, and made visits to the Huntarian Museum and the Parliamentary Archive. The programme for 2015 has yet to be finalised, but will include Ethel Corduff sharing an aspect of her research into a family member and Sarah Rogers on the life of Amy Scott. The meeting details are:

**Venue:** RCN London Region on the fifth floor at 20 Cavendish Square.

**Start:** 4pm, with a presentation followed by a business/information meeting. Finish by 6pm.

**Dates:** Wednesday 11 March, Thursday 11 June, Thursday 3 September and Thursday 3 December.

There is no need to sign up in advance, just join us and enjoy sharing and learning more about the wonderful diversity that is the history of nursing. If you live outside London, do you want to lead a regional history of nursing group? If so, please contact any member of the HoNS committee for advice and help.
FEATURE

Claire Chatterton, Chair of the RCN History of Nursing Society, reflects on her involvement in the creation of a moving memorial.

Amid the plethora of events that marked the 100th anniversary of the first year of World War One, an innovative memorial at the Tower of London really caught the public’s imagination. At the beginning of November, the British press reported that the Tower was inundated with so many visitors that the surrounding area had become gridlocked and at times the nearby underground station was closed due to dangerous overcrowding. It has been estimated that the memorial attracted more than five million visitors after the project began in August. So what caused this phenomenon?

From 5 August ceramic poppies progressively filled the Tower’s famous moat. By 11 November, when the project came to an end, the moat contained 888,246 poppies – one for each British fatality in the First World War. The project, called Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red, was the brainchild of the ceramic artist Paul Cummins, with its setting by stage designer Tom Piper.

Each day at sunset, the Last Post was sounded and the names of some of those who died were read out. Once 11 November had passed the poppies were removed. The public had the chance to buy them with proceeds going to forces’ charities. They were all sold.

Unforgettable experience

Each poppy head was individually made by a team in Derby, so each was unique. Brought to the Tower in boxes, they were then assembled by volunteers working in the moat who added them to a wire stem, fixed them in place with a series of washers and then “planted” them. Once the project had ended, more volunteers helped to remove the poppies and send them to those who had bought them. More than 8,000 volunteers took part.

I was one of those volunteers and it proved to be an experience I will never forget. I found myself in the Tower’s moat in the rain with more than 200 others, spending an afternoon helping to create this moving display. At the end I was damp and had sore fingers but I was so moved, both by the poignant sight of so many poppies and the fact that those who died in the First World War clearly still mean so much to so many people. As I knelt to plant some of the poppies I thought about the lost lives that they represented and all those nurses who gave comfort and skilled care to many of them. In the words of Lawrence Binyon’s famous poem: “We will remember them.” I was so glad to have had the opportunity to do that.

A sea of red
History: a work in progress

The UK Association for the History of Nursing's annual colloquium brings together researchers, both novice and experienced. It meets at a different venue each year and it is hoped that this year's event will be held in Worcester on 9 July.

Some years the colloquium has a theme but last year, at Kingston University, it returned to its roots, with a collection of papers presented that focused on work in progress. Speakers came from across the UK but also the USA, Germany, Denmark and Canada.

Jane Brooks (University of Manchester) used oral history accounts to give a vivid description of nursing experiences during the Blitz, while Dr Sue Hawkins (Kingston University), in a presentation entitled “On yer bike”, described her study of the mobility of Royal British Nurses’ Association nurses in late 19th-century Britain.

Rima Apple (University of Wisconsin-Madison) gave an interesting paper called “Inspection is the least of it” about the development of school nursing in the first half of the 20th century. She was followed by Kathleen Vongsathorn (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin), who presented her work on nurses and the transmission of biomedical knowledge in colonial Uganda. She argued that while women rarely appear in formal medical reports generated within Uganda, biomedically trained women outnumbered men in mission medical institutions.

Dr Deborah Simonton (University of Southern Denmark) gave a keynote speech on “Before Nightingale: gender, caring and the medical world”, illustrated with some fascinating contemporary accounts from Georgian England by those engaged in caring work and the medical world.

Two papers followed with mental health themes. Avril Ishmael (University of the West of England) presented part of her doctoral work on 19th century asylum attendants, illustrating her talk with some fascinating adverts for asylum staff from the Victorian period. Claire Chatterton (The Open University in the North West), who is currently researching inpatient psychiatric care on the home front during the First World War, outlined how the taking over of some psychiatric hospitals for wounded soldiers led to 12,000 inpatients being moved to other institutions, sometimes many miles away. The cost for the patients was high, with soaring morbidity and mortality rates as the war progressed.

Two further papers rounded off the day. Janet Hargeeves (University of Huddersfield) presented her work with Berenice Golding on nurses’ motivation and experience of humanitarian work with Médecins Sans Frontières in the late 20th century. Lastly Erin Spinney (University of Saskatchewan, Canada) discussed her work on nursing in British military hospitals between 1790 and 1815. She argued that the increasing involvement of nurses in the surgical care of personnel in British military and naval hospitals demonstrated the increased status of military nurses during this period. It situated their work within the medical model, shifting the realm of nursing work from the domestic sphere into environmental medicine.

Continuing the colloquium’s tradition of providing a supportive environment for researchers to present their work, each paper was assigned a rapporteur who provided initial feedback, which was followed by an open discussion.

Please look for details of the next colloquium at www.nursing.manchester.ac.uk/ukchnm/ukahn
In search of Amy

Sarah Rogers describes how a small, battered autograph book led her to the family of the First World War VAD who owned it

Amy Rosalie Scott’s Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) autograph book was sold recently at auction. Inside she had written her name, along with details of the two war hospitals in which she worked during World War One. Using this information it has been possible to find her living family who knew her well and who still have photographs of her, including two of her as a member of a VAD.

Amy, the eldest child of five, was born in Nottingham in 1896 to Mark Scott, at the time a baker journeyman and his wife, Isabella, a tailoress. In 1917, when she was 21, Amy joined the British Red Cross as a “VAD”, the term given to those who worked in Voluntary Aid Detachments, units that provided nursing support services during World War One. VADs who worked in military hospitals were given a £5 allowance for their uniform, while those who worked in auxiliary hospitals had to buy their own. Amy, who came from a working class family, would not have been able to afford a uniform.

Following a one-month probationary period, a VAD in a military hospital signed a six-month contract with pay of £20 a year, at the end of which the VAD had the option of renewing for a further six months; each renewal was linked to an increment in pay of £2 10 shillings.

Amy worked first at Catterick Military Hospital, Yorkshire, from April 1916 to November 1918, and then at Stanley Sailors Hospital, Holyhead, from November 1918 to April 1920. But these dates do not match those given on her record card. The earlier date would have meant that she was 20 when she joined the British Red Cross Society. It was not uncommon for someone to have been “economical” with their age in order to serve.

Soldiers’ concerns

The battered little autograph book is a suitable size to fit in a pocket. The entries reflect soldiers’ concerns at the time and their feelings about the war. They indicate where some served and demonstrate excellent artistic talents, reflecting life skills at the time.

After the war Amy became a nurse to two elderly women whose surname was thought to be Lowater and who are believed to have lived in Newport, South Wales. But it has not been possible to find Amy in the General Nursing Council registers;
occasionally nurses were allowed to register on the basis of their experience rather than the usual formal certificate of training. It is likely that Amy used her VAD experience and worked as an unqualified nurse.

Family oral history says that when the Lowater women died, they left money to Amy. Shortly after, Amy and her parents moved to Blackpool to manage a hotel called the Belvedere. After the owner died Amy bought a guest house in Blackpool and her parents moved there to prepare meals. During World War Two they looked after 40 RAF recruits.

This oral history has been corroborated by the will of Miss Mabel Lowater, who died in Gloucester in 1954 and left £300 to Amy, along with all her household furniture, clothing and jewellery. Amy was living in Newport at the time. Miss Lowater bequeathed the rest of the estate to her sister Fanny for her lifetime; thereafter it was to pass to Amy. Fanny died three years later aged 93.

In 1944 Amy and her parents moved back to Nottingham. Later in 1961, aged 64, she married an old friend John William Henry Harrison, 67, a widower and retired shop manager. At the time of their marriage Amy gave her profession as nurse/companion.

Amy was reputedly fit and healthy but died during a small operation in 1967, which was a great shock for her family. So far it has not been possible to locate her death certificate.

It was said that Amy liked the best of everything and that used to make the family laugh. They remember her as a very clever, independent woman and they recall her rolling up her sleeves at the hotel in Blackpool and getting stuck into the work.

Perhaps her soldier patients also saw this in her!

Sarah Rogers is a Monica Baly award winner and active member of the London and South East History of Nursing Group. Sarah has put together an illustrated biography of Amy Scott and this article is an edited extract.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Suzy, Amy’s great niece, and Suzy’s mother for sharing their family’s history and photographs, and to the British Red Cross Society for supplying Amy’s service cards.
Katherine Evelyn Luard (known to her family as Kate) was a trained military nurse who worked on ambulance trains and in casualty clearing stations in France throughout the First World War, resigning in November 1918 to return to the UK to nurse her father. Aged 42 when the war began, she was already a veteran of the Second Boer War. She was mentioned twice in dispatches and awarded the Royal Red Cross and later the Bar for her service during the Great War. During her time in France she wrote home regularly to her family in a rural Essex village and in 1915 a volume of these letters was published anonymously as *Diary of a Nursing Sister on the Western Front 1914-1915*. In 1930 a further volume of these letters was published, with the encouragement of her family, under the title *Unknown Warriors: The Letters of Kate Luard, RRC and Bar, Nursing Sister in France 1914-1918*. Long out of print, the latter volume has recently been republished in a revised edition by The History Press. Edited by Caroline and John Stevens (Miss Luard’s great niece and her husband) and with an introduction by her great nephew, Tim Luard, and Professor Christine Hallett (HoNS committee member), it gives a fascinating insight into her experiences. For example, at the height of the Battle of Passchendaele she was in charge of a casualty clearing station with a staff of 40 nurses and nearly 100 orderlies. On 2 August 1917 she wrote: “The men are brought in with mud over their eyes and mouths and 126 have died in 3½ days”; and on 22 August: “This has been a very bad day. Big shells began coming over . . . one burst . . . killed a Night Sister asleep in bed in her tent and knocked three others out with concussion and shellshock.”

Described in the introduction as a “long-lost jewel of First World War reportage”, this new edition will introduce a wider audience to this remarkable woman and her vivid accounts of her nursing work near the Western Front. I was pleased to meet Caroline and John Stevens recently when they visited RCN headquarters in London to see the exhibition in the Library and Heritage Centre, *Front Line Nurses: British Nurses of the First World War*, in which Miss Luard features. More information about Miss Luard’s life and letters is available at [http://kateluard.co.uk/](http://kateluard.co.uk/).

CLAIRE CHATTERTON recommends *Unknown Warriors: The Letters of Kate Luard, RRC and Bar, Nursing Sister in France 1914-1918*