

A review of the first 50 years of The League on the occasion of the

50th Annual General Meeting
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50 years of 'The London Hospital League'

This will be, essentially, a personal account of the history of the League over the past 50 years. There are founder members of the League present today, and many who have been members for over 40 years, so that I feel ill qualified to speak on some aspects of an history in their presence. In the space of one hour, one can only make some observations, and draw your attention to certain fundamental issues that have not changed over the years. In making choices - there will inevitably be omissions and I can only suggest that you will all enjoy adding your own reflections and sharing these together during the remainder of the day.

The chief source of material about the history of the League comes from copies of 'The Review'. It is a rich source, from the first copy in 1932. The tradition of "Matron's Annual Letter to her Nurses" which Miss Eva Luckes began and which was continued by Miss Beatrice Monk, was broken in 1932 when Miss Littleboy wrote her letters to be published in the League Review.

Founding of the League

The League was founded in 1931 by Miss Beatrice Monk, CBE, RRC.



She was Matron of 'The London' from 1919 when Miss Luckes died until 1931 when Miss Littleboy succeeded her. Miss Monk was an amazing woman - unassuming yet an organiser committed to the development of nursing as a profession - and President of the Royal College of Nursing from 1938 to 1940. She was most supportive to at least one new Honorary Secretary and new Committee members and remained interested in the progress of The London and the League until she died in June 1962. When some of us went to the ICN Congress in Rome in 1957, she lent us her cine' camera to record the events so that we might share our experience with others. In 1931, when founding the League she was supported by two Vice Presidents - Dame Maude

McCarthy, GBE, RRC, L.H. 1889 - to S. African war, Matron in Chief Q.A.I.M.N.S., British Armies in France 1914 -19, T.A. Service 1920 - 25, died April 1st 1949, and Miss A. McIntosh, CBE, RRC, ex L.H. 1897, Matron of Barts from 1910 -1927 and a founder member of the RCN.

The first Honorary Treasurer was Miss Littleboy, and Miss Dorothy Harvey, the Tutor Sister was the Secretary, and there were 18 Committee members. The objects of the League were set out and printed in the first copy of the Review in 1932.

- a. to form a bond between past and present London Hospital Nurses;
- b. to undertake such work as may from time to time be conducive to the welfare of the League and the Hospital.
- c. to encourage the members to maintain a high standard of work and conduct.

Setting out objectives is therefore not a new phenomenon! How have these objectives been carried out over the past 50 years?

a) to form a bond between past and present staff

This is very evidently an objective that has been achieved. It is evidenced not only by attendances at League meetings, but also by the letters written to the Hon. Secretaries, there have been 8 of these during fifty years -

Dorothy Harvey	1931 - 36
Edith Cockett	1937 - 48
Gwendolen Oliver	1949 - 54
Sheila Collins	1955 - 65
Margaret Kneale-Jones	1966 - 67
Diana Blute	1968 - 72
Elizabeth Torrance	1972 - 74
Helen Litten	1975 -

Many League members keep in touch with each other, offer hospitality to members travelling abroad, and share their experiences by writing accounts of their work at home and overseas.

It is amusing to read in the editorial of the first copy of the Review "it is hoped that all League members will feel inspired to send information for the Review" - and "it would be a great help if they add RRC or other honours that they hold after their names - and also SRN when entitled to do so."

The fellowship - or this bond - between League members is also seen by the continuing generations training here - children, grand children, great grand children, and God children - both men and women - since the first men began training here in 1968.

The Benevolent Fund has benefited from your donations, from legacies from former members, their friends and patients, and through it we have been able to assist members who need help in difficult times. There have been six Presidents in past years, one of whom is here today, and I am sure each of them shared my feelings of real pleasure, when acting as treasurer of the Benevolent Fund. The knowledge that

help can be offered and accepted indicates that fellowship exists. For the record these six Presidents were:-

Miss Beatrice Monk, CBE, RRC	1931 - 34
Miss M. Littleboy	1935 - 38
Miss M. Reynolds	1938 - 41
Miss C.Alexander	1941 - 61
Miss P.M. Friend, now Dame Phyllis	1962 - 72
Miss Sheila Collins	1972-

b) to undertake such work as may from time to time be conducive to the welfare of the League and the Hospital.

The Hospital

1. Recruitment. One of the functions of the League has already been mentioned - encouraging others to take up nursing. A much wider recruitment effect can be identified also - as an example - three of our Nursing Career's advisers have been recruited at a League meeting during the past fourteen years - Derry Wilmot, Vicky Styles, and Unity Kingsmill.

2. Back to Nursing. Recruitment to the nursing staff of the hospital, and back to nursing elsewhere, has been a feature over the years. In 1966 Elsie Anderson wrote an article "Bridging the Gap" about her return to nursing at the Zachary Merton Home, Banstead and Patricia Mills (nee Hunt) wrote an account describing how, encouraged at a League meeting to offer her services to her local hospital, she came back to nursing and found herself becoming a clinical teacher at the 'Radcliffe.' Seven years later, Glenys Brommeyer nee Harrison wrote to say that that article had spurred her on to return to nursing as her children grew older, and she was working for 3 nights per week in a hospital in Adelaide, Australia, where her London Hospital badge gained her considerable respect from the medical staff.

3. The Roses. The excitement engendered by the building of the Pathology Department on the Garden of Eden will long be remembered by many of us - and the promise by the Chairman of the London Hospital Board of Governors to League members to replace this by a garden around the tennis courts behind John Harrison House. This was followed by the gift of rose bushes by League members - and in particular by a Mile End member - for the roses in the hospital garden. Those of you who came in through the Front Door will no doubt have seen that the garden is again "subject to workmen" - but the raised garden next to the dining room is taking shape - and the roses will be replaced there!

The League

The Welfare of the League

In 1932 the Annual subscription to the League was "5/- to include the Review which shall not be sent in any year until the subscription for that year has been paid." Contrast that with today's rates - £1. In 1951 the cost of posting Election papers for the League gave cause for concern - it had been increased from one penny to one penny halfpenny! In 1958 to post the Review cost 6 pence - as opposed to present rate of 19p.

c) to encourage the members to maintain a high standard of work and conduct

It is in this "last object" that perhaps the influence of League membership on professional nursing can best be illustrated from a study of the Review. The pattern of League events and meetings was set in the early days - a nursing demonstration on up-to-date methods, a discussion or lecture by a physician, surgeon or pharmacist on new developments in treatment, and visits to departments newly opened in the hospital.

One of the early functions (now extinct!) was an annual dinner. It is known that at least one eminent League member joined the League as she could not bear to miss the dinner! In 1932 some 217 members attended the dinner but Miss Littleboy recorded that the remainder "who had applied late, were unable to be accommodated at the dinner, and could only attend the reception held afterwards . . ." Times do not change nor people!!

The first nursing demonstration was given by Miss Rose Simmonds on her early dietetic work at The London - and she commented 'In England - in contrast to America - we have realised the importance of nurses helping in research work by means of accurate first hand reports on the effect on the patient of diets and their variation, by the accurate weighing of food not eaten - though served on a tray.' The search for accuracy - and the need for research continues.

Recurring themes

Three recurring themes occur in searching for high standards of work and conduct:-

- 1) Professional responsibility for nursing by improving methods of service by training and education.
- 2) Organisational change and its effect on the delivery of nursing care.
- 3) Changing social trends.

Some illustrations of these are shown in the exhibition which you will see later in the Princess Alexandra School of Nursing. A few examples may be helpful here.

1). The League and the National and International scene

When the League was established it became affiliated to the National Council of Nurses and through that with the International Council of Nurses. League members - including Clare Alexander, played a prominent part in the work of the N.C.N. Miss Daisy Bridges the General Secretary of the I.C.N. gave a talk to the League, and league members participated in discussions on the work of the Grand Council of the N.C.N. and in preparation for the I.C.N. Quadrennial Congresses. These were held in London in 1937, in America in 1947, Sweden in 1949, Brazil in 1953 when Muriel Hill represented the League. In Rome in 1957, 13 members attended including Peggy Daly, Margaret Deadman, Maureen Scholes, Edna Pope - and me, Miss A.K. Burgess, Miss Ceris Jones and Miss Muriel Hill also attended representing other bodies. In 1961, Miss Ceris Jones went to Australia, and Miss Burgess and Dorothy Buchanan also went.

In 1962 the N.C.N. was amalgamated with the R.C.N. to form the R.C.N. NCN. UK. In 1965 at the I.C.N. Congress in Frankfurt, Phyllis Friend was a delegate from the Florence Nightingale Memorial Committee and I was a delegate from the Rcn of which I was then Vice Chairman of Council.

In 1969 I had the privilege of speaking on Education and Training of Nurses at the ICN Congress in Montreal and in 1973 Miss Day, Mary Salter and Anne Field went to Mexico. In 1977 the Congress was held in Tokyo and later this year, Joy Robbins, Anne Johnson, a Ward Sister, and I are setting off to Los Angeles, where we shall meet many other League members! These occasions are social gatherings - but they also provide opportunities for professional visits, discussions, and sharing facts, ideas and aspirations. The chance to meet League members from other countries, and to make contacts for professional visitors is of incalculable benefit.

International recognition

Miss Gwyneth Ceris Jones was awarded the Florence Nightingale Medal of the International Red Cross - the highest International nursing award.

National Recognition

League members decorated during the past 50 years include -

MBE

Lilian Freeborn
Margaret McEwan
Doris Bulley
Phyllis Dillistone
Gladys Martindale
Elizabeth Major
Ida Latham
Wendy Cross.

OBE

Dorothy White
myself
Clare, Lady Mann later awarded the CBE.

Phyllis Friend awarded **CBE** in 1972 and **DBE** in 1980.

Damaris Reynolds, Sister Sickroom awarded the **Queen's Jubilee Medal in 1978**

Royal College of Nursing & N.C.N. U.K.

The link between the professional organisations for Nurses in the U.K. and the League has been forged by members in branches, sections and centres. Miss Muriel Hill was Chairman of the Tutor Section from 1957 to 1960 and I had the honour of acting as Vice Chairman and then Chairman of Council RCN, and Deputy President from 1972 to 1974 and from 1977 to 1979.

Improving the service by better education and training of Nurses

Tredegar House - the preliminary training school had been established for probationers to enter before the turn of the century, and the "class system" whereby senior ward sisters held classes for the theoretical and practical instruction of their nurses persisted throughout the decades whilst Miss Luckes, and Miss Monk were Matrons, and during the early years following Miss Littleboy's appointment. Sisters-in-Charge at Tredegar House during the past 50 years included Miss Scotland who retired in 1935, Miss Vera Morley, Miss Winifred Huntley, Mrs Constance Cox, nee Brown, Miss Jane McCreath, Miss Peggy Daly and Miss Doris Browning.

In 1935 Miss Littleboy announced to the League that the "class system was to be amended, and the theoretical teaching was to be undertaken by two sister tutors - Miss Dorothy Harvey assisted by Miss Clare Alexander on her return from the King's College of Household and Social Science where she had studied to become a tutor, after gaining the Cowdray Scholarship of the Royal College of Nursing.

Ten years later on August 1st 1945, whilst Miss Alexander was Matron and Miss Annie Harris, Senior Sister Tutor, the system of training was developed further with the introduction of the Class Day System (subsequently called the Study Day System). Miss Harris, who was a Bachelor of Science, had been a teacher for many years when she took up her training at The London Hospital in 1930. After qualifying and working as a staff nurse in hospital and on the private nursing staff she became Sister and then Sister Tutor, a post she held until her death in 1951. She quietly but firmly organised the teaching at sector hospitals, throughout the Second World War, maintaining contact with student nurses who were evacuated and inspiring many of them to consider nurse teaching as a career.

The first Study Days for Ward Sisters were introduced in 1949 - at first as study days of orientation for newly appointed ward sisters but continuing for all sisters at least twice during the year.

In 1959 these Study days included "Public Health Visits" introduced so that the sisters would know and understand what the student nurses were discussing when their visits were arranged!!

In 1949 the Review records Monica Roger's impressions of the Ward Sister's course she had attended this was the first of the ward sisters' courses arranged by the King's Fund. In many subsequent reviews others record their experiences of similar courses.

The changing pattern of Nursing education and the developments of differing courses are illustrated in the Exhibition, but the following brief information is included - "for the record" and the next 50 years!

The Tutorial System began in 1962, and is fully described in the Review and the nursing press. In 1968 the course for S.E.N. and SRN/Degree associated course began, and under the vigilance of Derry Wilmot, Roger Coward's film 'Not so much a training. . .' was produced.

In 1970 the 4 year course for SRN/RMN began with Edith Parker as Senior Tutor, and this is described in the review. Eight years later a shortened course for graduates began, and in 1979 the pattern of intakes to training was altered to 6 intakes per year of 50 student nurses for a modular-style training.

In 1967 the opening of the building The Princess Alexandra School of Nursing took place on April 25th by HRH Princess Alexandra - fourteen years ago to the date! At that time Tredegar House became part of the whole course, and post-basic clinical courses of preparation for registered and enrolled nurses in highly specialised nursing were being planned and undertaken, to come under the aegis of the JBCNS when it was established.

In 1932 - an advertisement appeared in the Review for a textbook "General Nursing - a text book for the State Examination - written by Alan Perry, Surgeon, and Miss Dorothy Harvey, Sister Tutor at L.H. "There are not many textbooks by nurses who are League members - with the exception of Miss Powell's Aids to Orthopaedic Nursing and M.E. Crispin's "Handbook of Practical Nursing," and Joy Robbins' "The Profession of Nursing."

A book about nursing at The London Hospital, however, should be on every Londoner's bookshelf; 'Patients come first" by Margaret Broadley which is on sale in the school today - price £3 per copy!

2) Organisational change and its effect on the delivery of nursing care

Changes in Legislation

a) The Nurses' Act

In 1934, Miss Littleboy reminded the 1,026 League members that "after 1st June 1936 no candidate will be admitted to the Preliminary examination of the G.N.C. unless she posses the general school certificate or its equivalent, or has passed a

general educational entrance examination set by the G.N.C." In 1937, she was also reminding members of the professional responsibility for voting in elections. Even in the elections to the League Executive Committee there was cause for concern - "these low figures are a cause for concern, and a serious matter, although only 7 papers were sent unsigned as against 12 on the last occasion." Clearly professional attitudes to, and participation in, voting in ballots has always been a problem - even when women's franchise was relatively new!

The Nurses Act 1949. In January 1951 Miss M. Henry, Registrar the General Nursing Council for England and Wales came to speak to Members on the new Nurses Act 1949. In paying tribute to the Vice Chairman of the G.N.C., Miss Clare Alexander, she spoke of the need for negotiation over differing professional viewpoints, over the need for discussion and for any agreements which result to be both fair and enduring, as well as settlements which are mutually acceptable.

-This is clearly apt at the present time, after thirty years - for those of us who are charged with implementing the Nurses Act 1979 - and no doubt Miss Parker, the current Vice Chairman of the G.N.C., who is here today, would endorse Miss Henry's words. In 1949, Miss Henry saw as a vast improvement the provision under the Act for separating the finances relating to nurse training from the finance for hospital administration. Thirty years later we now see the need to continue that identification and separation of funding to include all nursing and midwifery education.

Miss Henry stressed the importance of getting able people to serve on committees "I would like to stress the tremendous need for the registered nurse who has had a fine training herself to feel it her duty to do anything which she can to assist in these public works, which are now being undertaken by so few members of the profession." In the current legislation the majority of members are again nurses - yet the need to ensure at election that such nurses are both able *and* willing to undertake additional work is very important.

Under the 1949 Act male nurses were admitted to the General part of the register, and it was the last chance for nurses trained before 1925 to apply for registration.

b) The National Health Service

"It is difficult to identify any specific change, and I doubt if nurses in the wards are aware of very much difference from the administrative angle, however, there have been many changes and there has been a great increase in Committee work - I think a real danger to efficiency. It has always appeared to me that the more things are discussed, the less progress is made - it tends to make it difficult for a decision to be reached." Guess the date that was written? . . . It could have been 1974 or 1981 - it was in 1949. In that same Review Dr. Stanley Thomas, a member of the L.H. Board of Governors addressed the League on "The G.P. and the N.H.S." and it makes fascinating reading.

As we await the next re-organisation of the management of the N.H.S. we will keep our eyes firmly fixed on our patients' needs - as our predecessors did.

Organisation

Workload

At our 25th anniversary, Miss Ceris Jones gave some statistics of interest. In 1956 the nursing staff of the L.H. and its annexes totaled 838 - of which 531 were student nurses in training. She also gave the following figures regarding patients - 93% bed occupancy, and at L.H. 1,082 patients were admitted during the month of April 1956 to 661 available beds. She remarked that it would be interesting to see what changes there were on the 50th anniversary of the League.

Direct comparisons with these figures are no longer possible since the District has enlarged too. But it is possible to indicate the changes in the patients' statistics in another way for direct comparison, and for this I am grateful to the statistician.

In 1956 in the L.H. Whitechapel, *only* there were 686 available staffed beds and at the end of the year in December 1956, 14,911 patients had been discharged, or died, during the year. The average length of stay in general medical beds was 20.27 days, and the waiting list for all patients was 2,341. In 1980, in the L.H. Whitechapel, *only*, there were 627 available staffed beds (59 less) and at the end of December 1980, 19,323 patients had been discharged or died, during the year, an increase of 4,412 patients treated. The average length of stay in general medical beds was 13 days (a fall of 7.25 days) yet the waiting list for all patients was 4,507, *an increase of 2,266 patients or almost 50%*. No doubt many of you have been lost in these figures - the facts may be summarised thus - twenty five years has shown an increase in the number of patients treated as in-patients at the L.H. of the order of 4 1/2 thousand, in 60 fewer beds, because the average length of stay dropped by one third. But in spite of this increased workload there are almost twice as many patients on our waiting list!

Hours of duty

This increase in workload has been accompanied by changes in the hours of duty for nursing, medical, administrative and clerical, ancillary and other support staff.

In 1938, Miss Reynolds recorded that "we are still working steadily towards the much discussed 96 hour fortnight. The sisters' long weekends once a month from 7 p.m. Friday till Sunday night, or from Saturday mid-day to noon on Monday are a real boon. The staff nurses have a second weekend in a month (1/2 day Saturday and day off Sunday) and the night staff have 2 nights at a time, approximately every 3 weeks - ensuring 8 nights off in each 3 month period of night duty."

By 1958 "we are actively considering the reduction in hours for nursing staff from 48 to 44 hours per week - as recommended by the Ministry of Health, and hoping to conduct an experiment in a medical and surgical ward." This was put into effect by March 1959 after a work study, by Mr Hornsby, loaned from the Ford Motor Company.

1966. The hours of duty were reduced from 44 to 42 hours and an additional 50 nurses had been needed to effect this change. The hours of duty were further - reduced to 40 hours per week in 1970 and to 37 1/2 hours in 1981. "Everyone is

agreed that the work must not be allowed to suffer in any way, and the further reduction of hours will necessitate an increase of staff." Mabel Reynolds - 1938.

"This new recommendation produces a tremendous challenge to us, and one for which we must find a practical solution, without lowering the standard of patient care and that is the crux of the problem." Miss Ceris Jones - 1958.

The implementation of the 37 1/2 hour week "means the loss of 6,000 hours to this District, which will require another 160 replacement staff - We cannot maintain a high standard of care to the patients and meet all these laudable training recommendations within a shrinking budget unless we reduce the number of units we staff. It may be better for our patients if; remembering our caring responsibility, we think carefully for the future - shouldn't we want quality and not quantity?" Miss Day - 1978.

3) Changing social trends

Over the past 50 years society has been continually changing and last year many of us had the chance to hear first hand about changes at the L.H. over the past decades. In 1935, the Chairman of the Hospital "readily consented" to the Matron's request that nursing staff should smoke in the large sitting room in the Luckes Home, "this concession has been much appreciated by the nurses and they have not taken advantage of it in any way. ' We are currently trying to discourage smoking!! It is difficult to recall that we were expected to wear hats and gloves when off duty even in 1939. Nurses do retain some traditional patterns of behaviour - for example when announcing the new uniform in 1942, Miss Alexander said at a League meeting - "The mention of uniform is always sufficient to start a really good argument that I am sure cannot be equaled anywhere outside the L.H. - so I leave this subject thankfully and am glad that it is not now going to be thrown open to discussion - at least in public."

In the post war years League members contributed to work of reconstruction. Dame Doris Beale, on behalf of the B.R.C.S. on the relief of Arab refugees, Lois Morgan with S.S.A.F.A. with the British Army of Occupation in the Rhine, Rose Simmonds, (with Elsie Stephenson a H.V.) went with a B.R.C.S. Child Welfare team concerned with the nutrition of children in Berlin. In 1939, Miss Reynolds records in her letter in the Review an account of the L.H. preparing for war. It is amazing that the League held a general meeting at 7 p.m. on Saturday

1st February 1941 and Miss Burgess, Acting Matron, welcomed a large gathering who had come in spite of all the difficulties of transport and blackout. She recorded in the Review for 1940/41 a tribute to the nursing staff:

"The London, in common with many other hospitals has suffered badly. I am sorry you have to see it so scarred - but they are honourable scars. A good deal is said about the modern generation and modern student nurses. When the trouble started in September 1940 we had a staff of 250 here, and many were very very young. I take this opportunity of expressing publicly my great appreciation of all that was done by those young people - led by our Sisters, they worked magnificently. I believe it is the spirit of the London that is within us all - the tradition of the London is our very

great heritage and I hope we shall go forward and be worthy of that tradition and keep its name well to the fore."

In spite of all the changing trends the essentials are the same today - the pupils and students who enter the school, and the trained nurses - sisters and charge nurses, staff nurses and enrolled nurses. The continuity is there, whilst the District has grouped the nursing service within 5 hospitals (in contrast to the 7 hospitals and 3 annexes) and with the merging of the League of Mile End with the London Hospital League in 1971 and the grouping of the schools from Bethnal Green, St. Clement's, Mile End and Mildmay Mission within the Princess Alexandra School of Nursing. Last year we heard of training during past decades. Today we consider the history of 50 years of the League (it is also the 100th anniversary of the founding of the training school), remembering some of the incidents which have taken place and the people who have recorded them for us in the Review.

Next year, perhaps we should look forward - and consider the nursing research that is being carried out here to develop our nursing records, and our methods of delivering nursing care.

The research studies were started here by Jennifer Hunt in 1977 - on Communicating Nursing Instructions. Margaret Ricks (now Mrs Ogier) gained a D.H.S.S. grant to study Ward Sister/Learner interactions and gained her doctorate. Some of her colleagues were privileged to see her presented to the Vice Chancellor H.R.H. Princess Anne, and then to attend the service of dedication in Westminster Abbey

Denise Barnett was appointed in 1980 as Senior Nursing Officer Research to continue the development of Nursing Care Planning in the wards. Mrs Dunn, Senior Tutor, is developing a research study on methods of assessing the student and pupil in the Wards, and Caroline Cox nee McNiel-Love, is Director of the Nursing Education Research Unit at Chelsea College.

With all these expert nurses searching for answers and seeking to find methods to improve our understanding of the various aspects of the care we practise as nurses and teachers, we should surely be able to move confidently forward into the next half century.

I have no doubt today - in this year when I shall soon retire from my present post - that the future is in safe hands - with members of the League, the present and former nursing staff and those who train and teach here.

An Exhibition followed in the school. The planning was done by Miss Margaret Broadley, and carried out by Miss Joy Robbins, with the assistance of Margaret Ingham, Peggy Crispin, Joyce Piggford and other colleagues.