



## STITCHING FOR THE RHN



When the RHN found it needed scrubs to help non-uniformed staff protect themselves at work during the COVID-19 pandemic the local community stepped in. Scrubs are loose fitting cotton or polycotton garments traditionally worn in operating theatres that can be washed at 60c after every shift, and so are good for infection control.

We reached out to Putney Rotary Club, the Women's Institute and Richmond Council for Voluntary Service for help, and they started to spread the word. Our own staff also bought fabric, sewed, and got their family members sewing.

At the same time, A&E nurse Ashleigh Linsdell from Boston Hospital in Lincolnshire started a Facebook page calling for people to make scrubs for healthcare workers. With so many people at home, both professional and amateur sewers, and with a groundswell of love and appreciation for healthcare workers the movement blossomed and grew. Soon there were regional groups with coordinators logging what was needed and organising the army of volunteer sewers. Free patterns

appeared online, as well as YouTube tutorials for the more difficult techniques, such as setting sleeves and doing V-shaped neck facings. The Facebook groups became places for sewing help and support during lockdown.

The RHN had reopened its laundry, which was being managed by Donor Development Manager Trudi Brown, and catering assistant Christine Crane who was redeployed after we had had to close our staff restaurant so that we could concentrate on providing food for patients. Trudi applied for us to be an approved hospital in the South London for the Love of Scrubs group and, only two days after our membership had been approved, our first batch of hand sewn donated scrubs arrived on 14 April. By 21 April we had received 25 sets from the group, which we began handing out to staff every day, and taking them back at the end to be laundered.

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## Stitching for the RHN continued

The following week two members of staff brought in 15 sets made by families and friends mostly from recycled materials like duvet covers.

While the donations continued to arrive from the South London Love of Scrubs we received a surprise donation from Holy Trinity Church Wandsworth, who are our next door neighbours, and had been sewing for us after being contacted by RHN Admissions Co-ordinator, Susie Wilford. We then received some donations from Richmond CVS, four embroidered sets from a woman whose mother had worked at the RHN, and

two substantial donations from South London For the Love of Scrubs.

By the end of May this incredible network of people had made 200 sets of scrubs for us, from fabric they had bought, recycled or had donated. We were overwhelmed and our staff absolutely loved the beautiful fabrics. They were going about their work in African prints, an upcycled Marvel Comics duvet cover, and huge green polka dots, which helped with infection control and raised morale. Some of the scrubs donated even ended up on the Victoria and Albert museum's blog about the pandemic.



Images: Christopher Taylor-Davies

## RHN Pianothon raises over £6,000

Over 40 kind volunteers took to Social Media on 14 and 15 April to hold a 24 hour Pianothon in aid of the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability (RHN) and our emergency COVID-19 appeal. Each performer livestreamed themselves playing the piano from their home which entertained thousands of people including patients and nurses at the hospital. We heard pieces from Beethoven and Ludovico Einaudi to Elton John and Queen!

The fundraising event managed to raise an incredible £6,300! If you missed it you can still view every performance at [www.facebook.com/rhnpianothon](https://www.facebook.com/rhnpianothon) - There you will also find the JustGiving link which we are still collecting donations to support the RHN care for patients who are extremely vulnerable to the threat of COVID-19.

Because of the Pianothon, the RHN will be able to source more PPE and medical equipment desperately needed at this difficult time. We would like to send a sincere thanks to each



performer, everyone who donated along with Bethy and Jo Reeves who worked so hard organising this brilliant event. The hospital is now looking to hold more online awareness and fundraising projects to raise more money for their emergency COVID-19 appeal. Should you have any ideas or suggestions please do get in touch at [events@rhn.org.uk](mailto:events@rhn.org.uk)

## Support the RHN with Amazon Smile

If you like to shop on Amazon, you can now support the RHN by signing up to **Amazon Smile**. Just go to <http://smile.amazon.co.uk> and search for the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability in their list of supported charities. Once you've signed up, remember to access Amazon via the Smile page, and for every purchase you make a small donation will wing its way to the hospital.

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# An appeal for the RHN Art Room

In our February edition of RHN Supporter News we told you about some of the art projects produced by our patients. Our occupational therapy art service is available to patients undergoing a programme of rehabilitation after a brain injury, as well as to long term care patients wishing to maintain their level of fitness, or simply produce art for pleasure.

'Art has really helped me to work on my upper body strength. Even though one of my arms is much stronger, it still needs a lot of work and tasks like papier maché are great for my dexterity.' Tina, RHN patient.

The Art Room at The Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability is a beautiful, calm space where patients can spend time away from the clinical environment, making new friends and enjoying themselves, whilst at the same time working towards their therapy goals. Sadly, during the restrictions imposed by the coronavirus epidemic, it was necessary to close the art room to protect both patients and staff from the threat of the disease. However, thanks to the hard work and dedication of everyone at the hospital, we have been able to open the room once more, and now we need your help and support to fund this much loved service as it resumes.



Learning to hold brushes and pens again, or using specially adapted scissors, gives our patients the opportunity to equip themselves with the skills they will need when they return home. Producing a piece of art, which is frequently a very personal endeavour, is also a chance for them to express themselves and experience a sense of achievement in their work.



'I like coming to the art room, because as well as getting some art done, I've really been able to spend some time laughing and joking with friends.' Derek, RHN patient.

'I was sad at first, when I became ill, but I realised I had to get better. The staff at the RHN are the best people to get better with, and art has been good for my recovery.' Karen, RHN patient.

The Occupational Therapy art room at the RHN doesn't receive any funding from the NHS, so every year **we have to raise £50,000 to offer this wonderful facility to our patients.** The money raised covers the costs of all the one to one therapy sessions our patients enjoy, as well as all the materials and equipment used, including the upkeep of a small pottery kiln.

A donation of as little as £15 could supply the art room with a box of mixed paper for drawing and painting, giving the patients a chance to regain vital dexterity, as well as express their feelings and come to terms with their disability. To find out how to support this appeal, please turn to the back page for more details.

# From the Archives: Matrons Through The Ages

by RHN archive volunteer, Elizabeth Priestley, with generous support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Throughout the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability's long history Matrons have played a vital role in the running and organisation of the Hospital. To celebrate the Year of the Nurse we want to take time to highlight some of the remarkable women who took on this role.

In 1902 Professor Gordon Cook, in his book about the Hospital, notes that those holding the position of Matron would be "responsible for the engagement, dismissal, and proper control of the assistant nurses and female servants, and for the efficient nursing and dietary of the Hospital...for the cleanliness and order of the Hospital, and shall have charge of the Kitchen, Laundry, furniture, fittings and linen."<sup>1</sup> A varied job description indeed!

Finding women who were able to fill this role whilst also being "kind and sympathetic...ready to give up their whole lives..."<sup>2</sup> was no easy task, and Florence Nightingale herself said that "Women fit to be Head Nurse are not, alas, so common..."<sup>3</sup>.

The Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability (RHN) Archive holds many documents and photographs which make mention of the Matrons and it is from these that we have discovered more about some of the women who worked at the RHN whilst it was still The Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables. Some were more successful than others, some were Matron for a long time, and others for only a short time, but they all played a part in the history of the Hospital.

## 1855 Matron Crossthwaite

Mrs Crossthwaite was the very first Matron employed at the RHN and, although she only held the position for a year, she paved the way for the women who came after her.

## 1856 Matron Bellringer

Mrs Eliza Bellringer was the second Matron at the RHN and had previously worked at another of Andrew Reed's institutions - "the Asylum for Idiots (later the Royal Earlswood Hospital)"<sup>4</sup>. She was Matron at the RHN for 9 1/2 years and oversaw the move from Putney House to Melrose Hall before retiring "due to ill health"<sup>5</sup>. In 1879 Bellringer was admitted into the Hospital as a patient where she lived until her death in 1881.

It may come as a surprise but Eliza was not the only member of staff to return to the Hospital as a patient. Sister Cave, who retired in 1933, was later admitted as a patient until "her death at the age of 92 ended a life of great dedication"<sup>6</sup>.



## 1866 Matron Haughton

Mrs Haughton was the first of the Matrons to be employed as one half of a married couple, where the husband took on the role of Steward for the RHN. Haughton and her husband proved to be "very popular"<sup>7</sup> but only remained at the Hospital for two years.

## 1869 Matron Darbyshire

Mrs Darbyshire was the second Matron to be employed alongside her husband. She began work in July, told her employers she was pregnant in September, had the baby in November, and was back at work by the end of December. A far cry from today's maternity leave! After Darbyshire had been working as Matron for about 8 years, her husband was involved in some rumours relating to the Head Nurse at the time. While Darbyshire recommended her husband "be suspended from his post for 'a few months'"<sup>8</sup>, the Committee instead decided to employ a new Matron and a new Steward.

## 1877 Matron Mason

After the Darbys left "it was decided to revert to the original plan of engaging a Matron separately"<sup>9</sup> and Emma Mason was given the role. Mason was "unanimously appointed" and "soon made a positive impact"<sup>10</sup>. Mason was responsible for changing the structure of the Hospital, introducing "Ward-maids" and "Divisional Nurses"<sup>11</sup>. Sadly, despite the positive impact she was having, in 1881 Mason resigned citing a lack of support from the committee and the increased responsibilities that had come with what was referred to as "the great extension"<sup>12</sup>.

## 1881 Matron Linicke

Mrs Linicke worked at the Hospital until she was 70. Not only was she the first Matron to serve for more than 10 years but she also had the distinction of being recommended for the role by Florence Nightingale. In a series of private letters to Dr Balfour Nightingale commends Linicke for the role of Matron, referring to her as "a competent woman"<sup>13</sup> with "remarkable powers of observation & of expression"<sup>14</sup>. She goes on to say that she "should not be at all surprised if you were delighted with her"<sup>15</sup>, something that her 21 year occupation of the role of Matron testifies to.



### 1903 Matron Stirling-Hamilton

While Stirling-Hamilton was Matron for six years, her time was not without its tensions, and in 1908 the Committee considered calling for her resignation; saying that her attitude was “unworthy of one holding her position”<sup>16</sup>. While her resignation was never demanded the following year Stirling-Hamilton left the Hospital.

### 1909 Matron Begg

Lucy Sarah Begg followed Stirling-Hamilton as Matron and held the role for 22 years. During which she spent some months on “Nursing duty in France”<sup>17</sup> during the First World War. When she retired she was awarded the M.B.E. as recognition for her service to the Hospital.

### 1930 Matron Potter

Miss Potter was another Matron who did not have an altogether successful employment. Although she served as Matron for six years, she was asked to resign as “she had not ‘won the affection of the patients, or the confidence of the outside public...’”<sup>18</sup>.

### 1936 Matron Rosier

Unfortunately the archive does not hold much information about Miss D. W. Rosier. We know that she held the position for six years and that the latter part of which was during the Second World War, an eventful time to be Matron!

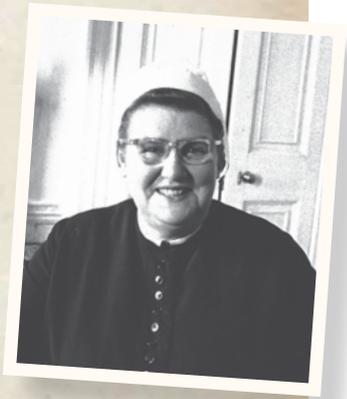


### 1943 Matron Corbett

Miss Corbett held the role for 12 years and was much loved by those she worked with. One of the Annual Reports says that “she had endeared herself to all”<sup>19</sup> and one of the nurses said this of her first meeting: “I stood outside her office with shaking knees. I need not have worried as she was so kind and helpful...”<sup>20</sup>. Corbett retired after the death of her mother.

### 1955 Matron Howard

Miss Clare A. Howard was the second RHN Matron to be awarded the M.B.E. and was highly regarded. Even during the interview process she was “considered outstanding”<sup>21</sup> and she went from strength to strength at the Hospital. Her career was described as “distinguished” and she “won the admiration of all by her devotion to duty and her undoubted ability”<sup>22</sup>.



### 1966 Matron Bodington

Mrs M. C. Bodington is the last Matron that the Archive holds records of. She came to the Hospital with a wealth of experience, her referee describing her as “a capable Sister...[who] had the power of supervision and authority... [who] showed interest in teaching the more junior staff.”<sup>23</sup> This interest in teaching continued and while she was at the RHN she “instituted various forms of In-Service Training and courses for Residential Care...”<sup>24</sup>. The RHN remains a place of learning today with The Putney Nurse Programme, and training courses and conferences run throughout the year.

### 1995 The Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables becomes the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability

### 2002 The role changes from Matron to Chief Nurse

### 2017 Our current Director of Nursing, Emily McWhirter, begins work

These women helped make the RHN what it is today.

The health and happiness of the patients rested on their shoulders:

“a year which includes a change of Matrons can never be uneventful, for the Matron occupies a unique place. Her methods and personality set the standard for staff and patients alike and on her, more than on any other single individual, the patients’ happiness and welfare depend.”<sup>25</sup>

We are always looking for more information about those who lived and worked at the RHN and would love to hear from you if you have any photos, letters or information that we can add to the archive.

#### References:

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- 3 Nightingale, Florence. *Letter to Frederic Andrews, Secretary of RHI*, 4th September 1861
- 4 Board Minutes, 1856
- 5 Cook, Gordon Charles. *Victorian Incurables: A History of the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability*. 2004, pg 156
- 6 Stokes-Roberts, A. E. *A Short History of the Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables Putney*. 1972, pg 29
- 7 Ibid, pg 10
- 8 Cook, Gordon Charles. *Victorian Incurables: A History of the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability*. 2004, pg 158
- 9 Stokes-Roberts, A. E. *A Short History of the Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables Putney*. 1972, pg 10
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- 13 Nightingale, Florence. *Letter to Dr Balfour*, 14th May 1881
- 14 Nightingale, Florence. *Letter to Dr Balfour*, 15th May 1881
- 15 Nightingale, Florence. *Letter to Dr Balfour*, 23rd May 1881
- 16 Cook, Gordon Charles. *Victorian Incurables: A History of the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability*. 2004, pg 166
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- 20 “Fond Memories”. *House Magazine*. August 1978, pg 5
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- 22 *Annual Report*, 1966, pg 5
- 23 Wylie, B. J. *Letter to Brigadier R. M. Villiers*, 9th November 1965
- 24 Stokes-Roberts, A. E. *A Short History of the Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables Putney*. 1972, pg 28
- 25 *Annual Report*, 1955

# Chaplain's Corner



RHN Chaplain, Geoff Coyne

Recently, I have been reflecting on the journey we as individuals and communities, have been travelling on over these last few months of the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent lockdown.

I suspect that for all of us we have had times of melt down, real awareness of our frailty, but we have also discovered that the human spirit is very strong and resilient, and we have achieved things that we didn't think we could. And I know that we have found new ways of working, a positive coming together and the strength to go the extra mile for each other.

As I reflected, I was reminded of a quote I came across some time ago. "Sometimes we're tested not to show our weaknesses but to discover our strengths."

There are still challenges ahead of us as the lockdown eases, but that inner strength is still there in us, and so let's keep persevering and drawing on that inner strength as we move forward.



## Lavender Remembrance Fund

Below are the names of past patients, volunteers and staff at the RHN, whose loved ones have chosen to set up a tribute fund and plant a lavender bush in their memory. The tribute lavender beds can be found in the RHN gardens. Please feel free to visit the hospital and take a look.

*Adeh Murray Sellar*

*Anne Prosser*

*Antony Olley*

*Avis June Smith*

*Barbara Garnham*

*Barbara Kelly*

*Catherine Ann Fitzgerald*

*Christopher Bedford*

*David Driver*

*David John Fincham*

*David John Gillett*

*Diana Merrick*

*Eileen Dorothy Barrett*

*Eileen McKay*

*France-Raoul Chateau*

*Ghulam Sarwar*

*Graham Boiling*

*Henry John Old*

*Hugh Munro*

*James Pirie*

*Kamaljit Toor*

*Lesley Jean Hyams*

*Lucy Jane Denniston*

*Margaret Deller*

*Maud Riley*

*Maureen Lesley O'Brien*

*Megan Paton*

*Megan Walters*

*Michael Lindsay*

*Neale Gordon-Wilson*

*Patricia Burston*

*Paul Loft*

*Peggy Stannard*

*Peter Gow*

*Peter John Davies*

*Peter Newton*

*Roger Smith*

*Rosemary Ann Shurrock*

*Sean Hamilton*

*Shirley Gill*

*Taranjit Kaur Chadha*

*Ted & Gladys Black*

*Trevor George Kingham*

*Ved & Helena Aggarwal*

*Winifred Warwick-Mayo*

Lavender Funds are a way of celebrating the life of a loved one while helping others in need of our specialist care and support. After setting up a fund you will also have the opportunity to plant a special memorial lavender in our peaceful garden.

For more information please contact Isabel Barrett in Fundraising on 020 8780 4557 or [ibarrett@rhn.org.uk](mailto:ibarrett@rhn.org.uk)

# Dates for your diary

## Thames Path Challenge

12/13 September 2020

Walk, trek or run 100km along the historic Thames Path in support of the RHN. With food, drink and rest stops every 12.5km, a medal and a glass of fizz to finish, this will truly be a spectacular day.

If this sounds a bit too challenging, there is also the 25km route **Thames Bridges Trek** on the same day.



## London Marathon

4 October 2020 - rescheduled date

Join team RHN and rock our charity running vest whilst taking on the world famous London Marathon. Make the most of our half price registration fee of £50, with a fundraising target of £1,900- we will of course provide top tips on how to reach your goal!

Don't miss the event organiser's registration deadline of Friday 31 July 2020.

## Royal Parks Half Marathon

11 October 2020

Take on London's biggest half marathon through closed roads and four of London's Royal Parks; Hyde Park, Green Park, St James's Park and Kensington Garden.

Sign up for only £25 and pledge to raise £350.



If you would like further information on any of these events then please visit [www.rhn.org.uk](http://www.rhn.org.uk) or contact the events team by email [events@rhn.org.uk](mailto:events@rhn.org.uk) or call us on **020 8780 4560**.

Follow us: [twitter.com/rhnuuk](https://twitter.com/rhnuuk) [facebook.com/rhnuuk](https://facebook.com/rhnuuk) [instagram.com/rhnuuk](https://instagram.com/rhnuuk)

Thank you to all the companies organisations and individuals who have supported the RHN during the coronavirus pandemic with gifts of equipment, food, clothing and transport.

**Putney WI The Old Rutslishians**  
**For The Love Of Scrubs Aramark**  
**Asks for Masks Positively Putney**  
**THANK YOU**  
**Community Transport Wandsworth**  
**Gail's Bakery Richmond CVS**  
**Lindt Chocolate**  
**Family Meal Saint Bede's School, Redhill**  
**Meals for NHS Bells**  
**Holy Trinity Church, Wandsworth Buses**  
**Tesco Bags of Help COVID-19 Communities Fund**  
**Cameron Design House Nescafé**  
**Dons Local Action Group**

**Please click [here](#) if you'd like to support**

The Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability's Art Room appeal.

- £15** will provide a box of assorted art paper for painting and drawing
- £20** will provide 12 bottles of water-based paint
- £25** will pay for a patient to enjoy a one hour leisure session in the Art Room
- £ \_\_\_\_\_** my preferred amount today

*giftaid it*

Don't forget to let us know whether or not you're a UK tax payer.

We can reclaim the tax on your donation and any future donations, to make your donation **25% more, at no cost to you!**

**Donate online:** [www.rhn.org.uk/online-donation](http://www.rhn.org.uk/online-donation) / Or call: 020 8780 4568

You can also donate by post, sending your gift to: **Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability, FREEPOST, London SW15 3SW.** Using a stamp will save RHN money. When sending a donation by post, we would appreciate it if you could include your address and email details so that we can continue to keep you updated on our work.

If this project is fully funded by the time we receive your donation, your gift will be used for the general benefit of patients at the RHN.



**Thank you for  
your support!**