

Gloucester District Nursing Society

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The Gloucester District Nursing Society was founded in 1884. The Gloucester Clerical Society of that date was deeply concerned about the needs of the sick and poor of the City. There was no provision for general nursing other than institutional, and these founders of the Society realised that equally valuable, and complimentary to institutional treatment, advice and medicine, was the service of skilled nursing in the home in times of sickness by nurses specially trained for the Work.

Accordingly the Rev. H.W. Maddy, for many years Vice-Chairman of the Board of the Gloucestershire Infirmary, and Dr R. W. Batten, one of the honorary visiting staff, met the members of the Clerical Society and together they formed a small Committee which sponsored the formation of the District Nursing Society. On November 13th 1884, the Society was formally constituted.

The Society began its work in January 1885 with a Superintendent (Miss Fryer) and two nurses, who were paid salaries of £25 per annum each with board and lodging at the Superintendent's own home, Cotteswold House, Park Road. In the following year an additional nurse was appointed and Mrs S.E. Courteen, who afterwards established one of the first nursing homes in Gloucester also gave assistance.

The Society's staff was lodged in sundry places in the course of its first 15 years. After Cotteswold House came successively 33 Parliament Street (soon found untenable because of defective drainage), 7 Arthur Street and 6 Bath Villas, Park Road, into which latter place the Society moved in 1895 when the staff comprised a Superintendent, Two District Nurses for the City, one Nurse for the outside district, one midwife and one nurse taking private cases outside the Society's immediate area on a higher scale of fees.

In 1896, the Society's work won official recognition, the old Local Government Board (which afterwards became the Ministry of Health) making a grant for nursing in the whole of the parishes of the Gloucester Poor Law Union. In 1897 came affiliation to the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute of District Nursing and in 1903 the Society was recognised by the Central Midwives Board for the training of pupils.

The Society was given premises in Clarence Street in 1900 and extended by acquiring adjacent properties to provide maternity wards.

The first maternity wards (four beds) were opened by Countess Beauchamp in June 1917. These were extended in 1922 to accommodate ten beds and again in 1935 to accommodate two ante-natal beds and a nursery. The accommodation was found to be totally inadequate and plans for the erection of a Maternity Hospital followed.

The Society also entered into contract with the Corporation for the provision of external Midwifery service throughout the City under the Midwives' Act of 1936.

Provident Contributory Scheme: The greatest extension of the Society's primary work, viz. the nursing of sick folk in their own homes, came with the institution of the Provident Contributory Scheme in 1934 which was maintained by the Voluntary Contributions of Employees of all the large firms of industrial employment and various local Societies. This Scheme now covered practically the whole of the City and enabled a substantial enlargement of the nursing staff.

Night Nursing Service: Established around 1937 to provide nursing attendance at night in acute cases and other emergencies of the sick poor. To meet emergency calls and generally expediate the service the nursing staff is provided with a motor car and a large number of cycles.

The National Health Service Act, 1946 placed upon Local Health Authorities responsibility for the provision of a free universal home nursing service, as had already been done in the case of domiciliary midwifery by the Midwives Act, 1936.

A permissive clause in the Act allowed Local Health Authorities to provide their Home Nursing services by means of a voluntary agency, and the Society provided this service for the Gloucester Corporation.

Booklet contains photographs of personnel and the Nursing Home.

1971: District Nursing Services were taken over by the Corporation.

1974: The District Nursing Charities (formally the Gloucester District Nursing Society) introduced a night nursing service for the City of Gloucester independent of the national Health Service.