

Matrons at Gloucestershire Royal Infirmary (later Hospital), 1887-1968

Sources: HO19/1/31, HO19/1/32, HO19/1/33, HO19/1/34, HO19/56/2

Newspapers: Gloucester Journal, Gloucestershire Echo,
Gloucester Chronicle, Gloucester Citizen, Birmingham Daily Post,

Census returns 1851-1921

1939 Register

Electoral Registers

Births, Marriages & Deaths database

Miss Elizabeth Yeats: 1887-1904



Matron at GRI from 1887 until 1904. Elizabeth Yeats was born in Richmond, Surrey, the daughter of a servant. Miss Yeats had been a Nightingale nurse and, prior to coming to Gloucester, she was the Sister of the Currie Ward at London

Hospital. Miss Yeats was Matron at the Infirmary for 17 years. She resigned in 1904 when she applied for and was appointed Matron at Over Hospital in Gloucester at a salary of £60 pa. By 1911 she was found to have retired and be living in Clewer, Berkshire with an allowance from the Royal National Pension Fund for Nurses. She died in Clewer aged 81 in 1928. A tablet to her memory was unveiled in the Infirmary Chapel in Gloucester in 1929. It was stated that 'her disposition, conduct and work endeared her to the sisters and nurses who came under her charge'. In addition to the memorial tablet, a fund was created to provide a probationer nurse's prize in memory of Miss Yeats.

Miss Kate Elizabeth Oyler 1905-1917

Miss Oyler was appointed to the post of Matron in December 1904 and would serve from February 1905 until 1917. She was born in June 1873 in Islington and attended Claremont House School in Kent as a boarder. By 1901, aged 29, she was working as a nurse at the Royal Portsmouth Hospital. In 1913, it was stated that she was 'a prominent member of the Territorial Nursing Committee'. However, in January 1916 a case of libel was reported in the Gloucester Journal; that of Isabel Mary Haines v Kate Elizabeth Oyler of the Royal Infirmary, Gloucester. Miss Oyler's solicitors were Wellington and Clifford, Gloucester. Miss Oyler resigned her position at the Infirmary in 1917 and moved away from Gloucestershire. By 1921, age 50, she was Matron of the Langho Epileptic Colony in Billington, Lancs. On the 1939 register, Miss Oyler, a 'trained nurse, retired', was living at Knowle Cottage in Skipton, Yorkshire. Miss Oyler died in 1957, aged 84.

Miss Tilson 1917-1919

It was reported, that at the quarterly Governors meeting in September 1917, the Committee had appointed Miss Tilson as Matron. Miss Tilson had previously worked at Swansea Hospital. However, by October 1919, the Committee were searching for a new Matron and an advertisement was placed: 'Candidates must be fully qualified nurses, competent to superintend and to give instruction in nursing and thoroughly conversant with the duties of a Matron and Housekeeper' Salary to be offered was £125 pa with board, residence and laundry.

Miss Ripley 1919-1921

Miss Margaret Adele Ripley was appointed from 44 applicants. Margaret Ripley was born in 1878 in Clapham, London. She trained at Guys Hospital; at the outbreak of war she went to France, nursing in casualty clearing stations. On her return, she was appointed Matron at the Hospital for Wounded Soldiers in Swansea. Two years after her appointment as Matron at GRI, Miss Ripley felt that she needed to resign 'owing to the strain imposed by the very hard work'. She had made the decision to start a private nursing home in the city and on the electoral registers of 1922 and 1923 was listed as living at Sherborne House, Spa Road, Gloucester.

Miss Hughes 1922-1938

Miss Hughes was appointed and commenced her duties on 1st February 1922. She had trained at Leeds Infirmary and held positions there of ward sister, theatre sister and night sister superintendent. Miss Hughes served in France from 1915-1919. In May 1938, Miss Hughes resigned her appointment as Matron on account of ill-health. The Board accepted with regret, and Matron would be allowed to leave as soon as she needed to and would be given three months sick/holiday leave. An advertisement would be drafted for the post of Matron; it was decided that the candidates must be state registered nurses and not more than 40 yrs of age. The starting salary would be £225-0-0pa with board, residence and laundry. The advertisement would be placed in the 'Nursing Mirror' and 'Nursing Times' on May 14th and 21st. Miss Hughes would leave on May 27th 1938. Superannuation payable to Miss Hughes would be £2-5-0 per week. The General Committee of the Infirmary were to express to Miss Hughes, 'their warm appreciation of her devoted and loyal service to the hospital for the past 16 years'

Miss Schofield 1938-1945

From 19 applications, Miss Schofield was appointed at a salary of £225-0-0 pa. Miss Schofield trained at Leeds General Infirmary for four years, followed by midwifery training at Leeds Maternity Hospital and Housekeeping training at Leeds Infirmary. She held the post of Theatre Sister at West Hertfordshire Hospital, Ward Sister and Theatre Sister at Salford Royal Hospital. She was Night Sister at Glasgow Hospital for Sick Children and Acting Home Sister at that hospital for 18 months. She was Home Sister at the Royal Southern Hospital, Liverpool and Assistant Matron and Housekeeper at Birkenhead General Hospital. She was presently Matron of Royal Buckinghamshire Hospital. Miss Schofield would take up her duties on August 6th 1938. She made an application to keep a dog at the Infirmary; this was granted by the Board. However, by 1945, on recommendation of the Medical Board and the Weekly Board – it was decided that Miss Schofield should be asked to resign ‘in view of the widespread and general dissatisfaction amongst the medical and nursing staff’. The chairman would see Matron after 6th October 1945 when she returned from her holiday. Following this, Miss Schofield gave three months’ notice of her resignation wef 5th October 1945. Miss Schofield was presented with a testimonial cheque for £50

Applications shall be invited for the post of Matron, closing date 31st December

Miss Fensome 1946-1968

Miss Elsie Fensome, age 36, was appointed Matron from 6 candidates. Elsie Margaret Fensome was born in 1909 in Royston, Barnsley, Yorkshire, the daughter of a coal miner. She trained at Sheffield Royal Hospital and prior to GRI, she had been working at Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford. It was anticipated that she would commence her duties in April 1946; this being the start of a long career of 22 years with the Infirmary. In 1965, at a presentation by the Wall’s Ice Cream Factory of an ice gateaux to the Gloucestershire Royal Hospital which was represented by Miss Fensome, the Mayor, Coun. Lewis, described her as the ‘City’s Florence Nightingale’. He said that Miss Fensome was liked and respected by the many who had passed through her care and it was fitting that she should be congratulated on her work. Elsie Fensome retired from her post in April 1968 but remained in Gloucester. She was living in Armscroft Crescent in Gloucester when she died in June 1979, age 70.



Miss Fensome in 1948



Miss Fensome 1965 (*Glos Citizen*)