

Retired Nurses National Home
Residents' Meeting on Friday 24th January 2013
Memories of Nursing – the Importance of History

1) Why remember?

This meeting was by way of preparation for further recording of Oral histories from Residents who have not yet been involved.

It enabled Residents to begin to recall their own experiences of Nursing both as students and qualified staff and to consider ways in which their experiences were different from those of today's students and Practitioners. This raised awareness of differences and began to enable consideration to be given for the reasons these had arisen.

2) This was illustrated by using a DVD created by Kingston University as part of the 'Nurses Voices' project. This was one of several made by previous nurses at ST George's Hospital, London one of the London Teaching Hospitals involved in the project. Against a Background of the old buildings and photographs of nurses in the uniform of the day the recordings were played and discussed.

Residents found these reminiscent of their own experiences and it generated further discussion.

3) Hospital Nurses Leagues were then mentioned and many of the participants had or still did belong to the League from their School of Nursing. Examples of the Nurses League magazines were available from ST Thomas's Hospital, Manchester Royal Infirmary, The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, and Salisbury Infirmary. These groups were formed by the ex-students of the day. Many were still very active but there is evidence that they are beginning to fold as numbers of ex-students from these Schools became fewer in number and less active. They provide information about the members and about the Hospitals where they trained. They also record the activities of the League and of individual members. There are records of deaths and reunions of those sets which are still active with photographs of members meeting up for their Reunion

One League has considerable funds and provided money for overseas experience for today's students who are then required to record their experiences and submit an article to the magazine.

These groups help to keep memories alive and are important in seeking out the stories of former nurses.

4) Personal memories were then used to add to the discussion. A Cdrom created by a group of 1955 students at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary was used to illustrate some of the experiences of Eileen Richardson as a first year student. The anecdotes reminded others of similar experiences.

- 5) Nursing memorabilia. Several items of historical interest were brought to the meeting to raise further memories and discussion. These included a student nurse's Cape and a Laundry bag from Edinburgh. Hospital badges were also in evidence and their meaning and importance were discussed. A set of Nursing notes also provoked discussion especially as they began with 'cleaning the ward' But it was emphasised that students needed to know this not because they would be doing it but because they would be supervising those who would. The relationship between Doctors and Nurses was discussed and the way this has changed over the years

- 6) The last part of the meeting looked at the Nursing Research project which had been developed by a Bournemouth University professor who has since died. At least 2 Residents present had had their stories recorded as part of this project. The idea now is to return to the project and complete the work started in February 2009. The paperwork is all to hand and it will be possible for Residents who wish to participate to read the background and purpose of the project and to sign their consent to being part of it and giving their stories.

- 7) There is now a History of Health group in the School of Health and Social Care and they are interested to take this forward.

Eileen Richardson will pursue this Oral History project with the University in the hope that very soon the recording can begin again and stories be captured before they are lost.