

CHARITABLE SOLDIERS

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When researching our Enrolled Pensioner Guards, one cannot escape the numerous entries of our men subscribing to various Relief Funds. Some were for worthy causes overseas and one in particular; the Greenough Fire Relief Fund was closer to home. In assessing these relief funds for a possible story, one is drawn to the Florence Nightingale Fund. Our school days quickly identify Florence as the lady with the lamp however; what was the fund that bore her name?

First: let us revisit Florence's history. Florence was born on the 12th May 1820 at the Villa La Columbaia in Florence, Italy. Her father, William Edward Nightingale (1794-1874), was a son of William Shore, a Sheffield banker and a man of means owning estates at Lea Hurst and Woodend in Derbyshire. When William inherited the estates from his father he assumed the name Peter Nightingale after his mother's uncle. Florence was born in Italy whilst her parents were travelling the country.

The early education of Florence and her sister were placed in the hands of governesses, later, their Cambridge educated father took over the responsibility

himself. Florence loved her lessons and had a natural ability for studying. Interestingly; it was mathematics that became her favoured subject, a discipline that was to stand her in good stead when dealing with statistics of war related casualties and illness.

At age 24 she began to visit hospitals both in England and overseas, a practice she continued for eleven years. These visits convinced her that nursing was a suitable vocation for ladies.

In March 1854, the Crimean War broke out and the reports of the sufferings of the sick and wounded in the English camps created anger in Britain. William Russell, *The Times* correspondent, described the terrible neglect of the wounded, and pointed to the differences between the facilities provided for British and French soldiers. He asked: "Are there no devoted women among us, able and willing to go forth to minister to the sick and suffering soldiers of the East in the hospitals of Scutari? Are none of our daughters of England, at this extreme hour of need, ready for such a work of mercy? Must we fall so far below the French in self-

sacrifice and devotedness?" (*The Times*, 15th and 22nd September 1854).

Florence offered her services to the War Office on the 14th October 1854 and was given plenary authority over all the nurses and the fullest assistance and co-operation from the medical staff. She was also promised "unlimited power of drawing on the government for whatever she thought requisite for the success of her mission"

Florence arrived at Scutari on the 4th November 1854. The rest is history.

The Nightingale Fund
On the 2^e November 1855, a public meeting was held at Willis's Rooms, in St James Street, London. A committee was formed with Sidney Herbert as honorary secretary; the Duke of Cambridge was chairman. It was held to give recognition to Florence for her work in the Crimea. Speeches were made highlighting the country's gratitude for the work Florence had carried out for the soldiers in the Crimea. Many people had given donations and it had been the first thought to present her with an item of gold or silver suitably inscribed, but they received so much money, they felt the setting up of a Fund for the training of nurses would be better, so began, the Nightingale Fund. The money was to be spent on nursing training in all aspects, hospitals, infirmaries, midwifery etc.

The Fund continued to canvass for donations and a large number of the Enrolled Pensioner Guards subscribed to the fund in January 1859 (*Perth Gazette* 21st January 1857). By 1859, Florence had 45,000 pounds sterling at her

disposal to set up a training school. She felt that the most suitable place for the training to take place was St Thomas's Hospital located in Southwark, London, Florence would be the Patroness and organizer. Her health was such at the time did not allow her an active part in the nurses' training or even to **take up the role of Superintendent.**

Mrs Wardroper became the first Matron, she was without formal training, and did not take up nursing until she was 42. It was only through her sheer force of character that she rose to become a Matron in 1853. Florence was impressed that Mrs Wardroper had previously raised standards and was willing to take on the task of running the new school of nursing. Certain wards of the hospital were to give instruction to probationers and that the Matron should also be Superintendent, under the control of the Council of the Fund. The Matron would have the power to select lady probationers, and to dismiss them. **The first** probationers (ten) arrived on the 9th July 1860.

Not everyone welcomed the new scheme for training women to become nurses. Many of the doctors had old fashion ideas. *"the day-nurse or ward-maid should perform for the ward the usual duties of a house maid as to cleaning and bedmaking"*. Florence's platform was that the probationers were being trained to become, not bedside nurses, but nursing managers. The reform of nursing went ahead in spite of the opposition.

The site for a new St Thomas Hospital had to be decided upon,

as the Charing Cross Railway Company wanted the hospital land to expand its South Eastern Rail system. Florence, well known for her articles on building hospitals and analysed the hospital records and found that the majority of patients came from the suburbs and she suggested Blackheath. The site finally selected was at the Albert Embankment in the London Borough of Lambeth. Florence was furious. **The Nightingale Fund** disliked the new site and also the hospital building plans. The main objections **were the nurse** probationers' quarters, the size and situation of the accommodation, the fact that nurse probationers should have their own dining rooms and dormitories and that the Matron's office should be in close access to the nurse probationers. Some of Florence's ideas were adopted prior to building. Queen Victoria opened the new hospital on the 21st June 1871.

Over a period of 20 years with 604 lady probationers admitted to training only 357 completed a years training at a cost of 580 pounds sterling each. Women were often unfit for the duties they were to undertake. **A number of** probationers were unable to keep up with writing in lectures, many had difficulty during examinations, and it was beginning to show that the background of a probationer's education was becoming important. A women's role in society was also changing **with many other** opportunities becoming available to them. Many middle class educated **women were now becoming** Nightingale nurses.

Despite the initial difficulties, the Nightingale School of Nursing continued to be funded from the Florence Nightingale Fund and by

1882 Nightingale Fund nurses had become Matrons in many hospitals, including **Lucy Osburn who** graduated in 1867 and became Lady Superintendent of the Sydney Infirmary and Dispensary 1868-84 (later Sydney Hospital 1881) and she was the founder of Nightingale Nursing in Australia.