ICN Conference and CNR 2–8 May, Malta

‘A decided advantage to all’: The first thirty years of state regulation in Ireland, 1920–1950

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http://www.ucd.ie/icnmh/

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‘We may congratulate ourselves that our determination in the past was a strong factor in the framing of this broadly-conceived Act.’ (Margaret Huxley 1920)
The nurse and the State …

After a long struggle, State recognition has been granted to us, and now we hope, with an official register, our conditions will be brought into line, and both the medical profession and the public will have the means of knowing whether the nurse employed by them is what she represents herself to be – surely a decided advantage to all; and more than this, we hope and expect to be of service to the Minister of Health in his efforts to improve the standard of health of the nation.

The General Nursing Council for Ireland ...

The members present at the first Council included nine nurses and six medical and lay members.

Rules for ...
- the conduct of the Council's business,
- the formation, maintenance and publication of the Register
- the admission of nurses to the Register

Existing nurses...
The Council will admit those nurses who had ‘bona fide engaged in approved practice as nurses in attendance of the sick’ for a minimum period of three years and had at least one year’s training in a recognised hospital.

Approval of hospitals ...
Complete training school: ‘adequate training material ... [and] adequate staff and equipment for teaching, in accordance with the prescribed Syllabus for a three years’ training

Affiliated training school: hospitals not ‘sufficiently large to provide adequate material, staff or equipment for training’, but when working together with other hospitals, might be able to ‘furnish all the necessary requirements’ ... for approval.

Senator Edward Coey Bigger, First GNCI Chairman
First elected Council, February 1924 ...

The registered nurses in Ireland have shown themselves lacking in gratitude, as well as wisdom, in not electing to the new Council Miss Margaret Huxley, and Miss Alice Reeves; who worked so long and so strenuously to secure for them the professorial status which they now enjoy. These ladies showed public spirit in being willing to accept office, and although they will no doubt be glad to be relieved of the work entailed, neither the public nor the Nursing Profession can afford to lose their services.

Progress report ...

Existing nurses have registered in quite satisfactory numbers, I believe between three and four thousand up to the present time. Hospital Governors have been most willing to conform to the Regulation laid down in the Act and the Government Departments demand that their nursing appointments shall be filled by nurses whose names are on the Register. This is all to the good and in my opinion can only make for betterment and efficiency, which will be more and more apparent as time goes on (M Huxley 1925).

In the majority of cases the questionnaire was inadequate; in many cases evasive and misleading; and with a few exceptions generally unsatisfactory. The great majority did not, as requested, supply details of the lectures and by whom given. Some who did showed that they were unaware of the course prescribed by the syllabus. One showed that the surgeon devoted eight hours weekly to lecturing the nurses, while in direct contrast another showed that the lectures were given entirely by sisters and none by a doctor. Four had no skeleton for anatomical lectures. One had no skeleton, no RMO, no model, no lay-figures, made no return of lectures given but charges a premium. One had six trained nurses, sixteen probationers, over 200 beds; an average bed occupancy of 153; i.e. one trained nurse per an average of 25.3 patients ...

‘In a large number of cases [there was] an absence of proper organisation in the matter of training facilities in the hospitals at present recognised by the Council ... some hospitals showed an excellent effort to afford adequate training [others were] ‘handicapped by an unfortunate alliance.’

MS/GNC/220/117, 11 March 1936, p. 3.
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Mental nurses and the Royal Medico-Psychological Association ...
Mental nurses and the Royal Medico-Psychological Association ...

Take the necessary steps to ensure that ‘no persons be placed on the permanent staff [of a mental institution] unless they be fully trained and registered.’ Ibid., MS/GNC/220/117, 19 February 1929.
Conclusion ...
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MISS HUXLEY ENTERTAINS THE
IRISH MATRONS' ASSOCIATION.

REJOICINGS IN DUBLIN.

A successful and very pleasant function was the
dinner given by Miss Huxley, the pioneer of Irish
Nursing, to the members of the Irish Matrons' Association, on Tuesday, January 27th, to cele-
brate the passing of the Nurses' Registration Act.
A goodly company assembled at the Bonne Bouche
Restaurant, Dawson Street, Dublin, and were
received by the hostess of the evening.

THE GUESTS.

Miss Michie, Superintendent Irish Branch
Q.V.J.I., President Irish Matrons' Association,
Miss Hutchinson, Miss Sampson, Mrs. Manning,
Miss Hill, R.R.C., Matron Adelaide Hospital, Miss
Carre, Fanbridge, Miss O'Brien, Miss Carson Rae,
Miss Phelan, Miss Keating, Miss Towers, Miss
Hezlett, Miss Egan, Miss O'Flynn, Miss Crowther,
St. Patrick's Q.V.J.I., Miss Thornton, Miss
Reeves, President Irish Nurses' Association, Miss
Hughes, Miss Burkitt, Miss Bradburne, Miss
Golding, Miss Rhodes, Miss Riardon, Miss Power,
Miss Maconochie, R.R.C., and Miss Patton.

The dining-room was charmingly arranged with
oval mahogany tables artistically set out with
shining glass and silver and decorated with
mimosas and violets, the blue frocks of the
waitresses striking an effective note against buff-
coloured walls.

The dinner of seven courses made one feel that
the past five years were as a dream, and that the
Lamp of Aladdin must have been used to conjure
back days of plenty and delight when pleasant
faces and pretty frocks were an ordinary sight.
Miss Huxley occupied the chair, on her right hand
Miss Michie, President of the Irish Matrons'
Association, on her left Miss Reeves, President of
the Irish Nurses' Association.

The health of His Majesty the King having been
proposed and duly honoured, Miss Huxley
welcomed her guests.