Researching & Writing about Nurses, Midwives and Health Professionals in New South Wales

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Midwives:

The most useful sources are found in local archives or museums or at the NSW State Records Office. Personal details of individual midwives are rarely available and the researcher will need to examine birth, death and marriage and other genealogical records (to re-construct family details) as well as nursing/midwifery records to research careers.

1. **Local Newspapers**: In the years to the late 1930s Midwives worked in a small private hospital sometimes alone, more usually in partnership with a colleague. Midwifery was a highly competitive industry and midwives would advertise their hospital or their services in most editions of the local newspapers.

2. **Register of Licensed Private Hospitals, NSW State Records**, Kingswood, 1910-1928. From 1907 all private hospitals were required to be registered and this included maternity (lying in) hospitals operated by midwives and/or nurses...they are recorded under the name of the place, the hospital and the proprietor, see Series (5/5857-63). 7 vols.

3. **Australasian Trained Nurses Assoc. Register of Members, Midwives**, 1900-1920, copies are found at the Mitchell Library, NSW State Library.

4. **Local museum records.** Will have some records, oral and written, on individual midwives and private hospitals. Often these are patchy and incomplete but are at least a starting point for your research.

Nurses:

As for midwives, but look also at records of public hospitals, regional health facilities and government health departments for the wide range of material available for research.

1. **Local newspapers, museum records** as for midwives.

2. **College of Nursing, Burwood** - The College archive is the central repository for all material pertaining to the NSW College of Nursing and its successor organisation, The College of Nursing. The collection of material began when the College was established in January 1949. The archive was formally established in 1985 with the purpose of maintaining a historical record of both the College’s work and of nursing in Australia. Since that time the collections have been expanded to include the records of some notable nurses and selected nursing organisations. The archival and historical collection represents a major research resource which may be accessed by bona fide researchers. Contact: Judith Cornell 02 9745 7500

3. **Australasian Trained Nurses Assoc. Register of Members, General Nurses**, 1900-1920, copies are found at the Mitchell Library, NSW State Library.


Health Professionals & Social Welfare:

Nurses worked in social welfare areas including child welfare, prisons, women’s refuges, charitable and religious institutions. In the 19th and 20th century they worked as bush nurses, in child welfare institutions and as matrons/nurses in prisons and other institutions in the public and the private sector. The records of these are found at NSW State Records, NSW State Library and in religious and private repositories.
Websites:

Specialist Nurses

1. College of Nursing, 14 Railway Parade, Burwood, NSW

2. Australasian Trained Nurses Assoc. Register of Members


4. Records of the Australasian Neuroscience Nurses Association, including Australasian Journal of Neuroscience, Nursing History Research Unit, Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Sydney.

Ancestry.com.au (useful indexes here for researching nurses/midwives include:
NSW Assisted Immigration
NSW Unassisted Immigration
Australia Electoral Rolls, 1901-1936
First Fleet, 1787-1788, Second Fleet, 1789-1790, Third Fleet, 1791
Sands Directories: Sydney and NSW
Plus UK census and other records
This is a pay per view website, however the indexes can be searched for free.

Cyndi's List http://www.cvndistist.com/ covers all countries and every subject relevant to the researching and writing of family history.

FindMyPast: http://www.findmypast.com/welcome.jsp Of interest here are the English census and other including Passenger Lists 1890-1960

NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages Index Online: http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/

The Ryerson Index: http://www.rootsweb.com/~nswsdps/
(The Ryerson Index is an index to death notices appearing in current Australian newspapers. Within NSW, the bulk of the entries are from the two Sydney papers, the "Sydney Morning Herald" and the "Daily Telegraph". The north coast is covered with notices included from the Macleay Argus and Maitland Mercury.)


College of Nursing, Burwood http://www.nursing.edu.au/Archives/

Australian Services Nurses National Memorial http://www.members.optushome.com.au/lenorefrost/nurses.html - the names of the nurses listed were commemorated in the Australian Service Nurses National memorial, any additions to the list are welcome, email Lenore Frost at: Lenore.frost@optusnet.com.au


The Australian Nursing History Project: http://www.nursing.unimelb.edu.au/anhpovers.htm - seeks to establish an Internet accessible register of nursing historical resources, profiles of significant nursing individuals, organisations and events.

Noeline Kyle's writing family history http://www.writingfamilyhistory.com.au (includes a free index to over 600 midwives and their private hospitals on the mid north coast of NSW between 1900 and 1940s.)
Newspapers, municipal and council records:
Search local newspapers to find advertisements for nurse’s homes, rest homes, nursing homes, private nurses and private hospitals. Local municipal and council records are useful too, for example, notices of land transfers, rate books, property records, and valuation notices are helpful for tracking down midwives/nurses who leased or owned buildings from where they operated private hospitals, rest homes or nurse’s homes. Municipal and council records are found in local and regional libraries, within council archives/records, in city libraries and state record repositories.

The Royal Women’s Hospital, Melbourne, first public hospital for women, established 1856, http://www.thewomens.org.au/ourhistory

London Metropolitan Archives holds records of hospitals in London and Middlesex and have records of nurses and midwives who emigrated to Australia. Information Leaflet Number 36 – History of Nursing – Major Sources in London Metropolitan Archives.
http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk

The National Archives, Kew, London for Civilian Nurses and Nursing Services Information 79
http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Sources for research at NSW State Records:
Archives in Brief 118 – Nurses
This Archives in Brief provides an overview of the major sources held by SRNSW.
Following are some useful items as listed in Archives in Brief 118-Nurses:

Nurses Registration Board
The Nurses' Registration Board was established in 1926 under the Nurses' Registration Act, 1924.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Certificates of registration and miscellaneous certificates, c.1912-56</td>
<td>NRS 10859</td>
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<td>Registers of nursing certificates, 1918-33</td>
<td>NRS 10860</td>
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<td>Registers of general nurses, 1926-47; 1946-54</td>
<td>NRS 10855</td>
<td>Reels 2146, 2620</td>
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<td>Register of infants' nurses, 1926-54</td>
<td>NRS 10857</td>
<td>Reel 2620</td>
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<td>Registers of mid-wives, 1926-38; 1931-50; 1951-54</td>
<td>NRS 10856</td>
<td>Reels 2620, 2146</td>
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<tr>
<td>Register of psychiatric nurses, 1926-54</td>
<td>NRS 10858</td>
<td>Reel 2620</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minute books, 5 Mar 1925–27 Aug 1959</td>
<td>NRS 10854</td>
<td>Reel 2621</td>
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For General Nurses:
The following information is recorded: name, hospital trained at, certificate number, date of registration, records number, and remarks. 1926-47 (6/4430; microfilm copy SR Reel 2146), 1946-54 (6/4534; microfilm copy SR Reel 2620). 2 vols.

For Midwives:
The following information is recorded: name, hospital trained at, certificate number, date of registration or renewal, records number, and remarks. 1926-38 (6/4535; microfilm copy SR Reel 2620), 1931-50 (6/4431; microfilm copy SR Reel 2146), 1951-54 (6/4536; microfilm copy SR Reel 2620). 3 vols.

For Psychiatric Nurses:
The following information is given: name, hospital trained at, certificate number, date of registration, records number, and remarks. (6/4538; microfilm copy SR Reel 2620). 1 vol.

For infant nurses:
The following information is given: name, hospital trained at, certificate number, date of registration, records number, and remarks. (6/4537; microfilm copy SR Reel 2620). 1 vol.

The Colonial Secretary's special bundle – Nurses
Contains correspondence about the establishment of the nurses’ school at The Infirmary.

*a Nursing Sister* (sculpture by Ray Ewers) A nursing sister crouched at the head of a soldier laid out on a stretcher, with her hands on the man’s head. World War 2
Other Useful Archives in Brief from NSW State Records:
- Archives in Brief 6 – Local History Research
- Archives in Brief 7 – Tracing your family history
- Archives in Brief 57 – Hospital buildings
- Archives in Brief 88 – Crown Street Women’s Hospital
- Archives in Brief 106 – Local government records
- Short Guide No. 10 – Guide to professions and occupations

Records of private hospitals, various: see at NSW State Records, NSW State Library (Mitchell Library), and various government libraries.

Individual Hospital Records:
In many instances you will find records for nurses remain with individual hospital archives. Nursing associations and nursing postgraduate organisations also hold records or can help with research. Private hospitals will have their own archives. However in more recent years most of these hospitals have had some public funding and will have some of their records with the public sector.

Sources for research at NSW State & Mitchell Libraries:
See Family History Section on lower ground floor, online databases, pictorial and manuscript collection in Mitchell Library, newspapers, directories and search the catalogue for individual hospital material, nursing journals, ATNA registers, bush nursing and other nursing records.

Nurses and the Armed Services
Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service (RAAFNS) (1940 -)
http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0573b.htm

Australian War Memorial (AWM)
The AWM has an information sheet titled ‘Researching Australian military service: First World War nurses’. Australian nurses served in Egypt, Lemnos, England, France, Belgium, Greece, Salonika, Palestine, Mesopotamia and India. In all, 2,139 served with the Australian Army Nursing Service, and 130 with the Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Service. A further 423 nurses served in hospitals in Australia. Information on nurses in other wars can be found under the various names of military conflicts.

Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) (1903 - 1948)
The Australian Army Nursing Service, which was actually a reserve, was established on 1 July 1903. The Service was staffed by volunteer civilian nurses who would be available for duty during times of national emergency. Members of the Service served in both the World Wars, staffing medical facilities in Australia and overseas. In 1949 the Service became part of the Australian Regular Army and is now known as the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC). See the website http://www.womenaustralia.info/

The National Archives, Kew, London see British Army: Nursing and Nursing Services Information 55, Women’s Services First World War Information 74, and Royal Air Force: Nursing and Nursing Services Information 57, check for Australian nurses who were sent to London military hospitals and/or who trained there before or during the war. http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

The Dark Side of Nursing – Scandals, Crime and Corruption
The portrayal of women and crime is almost always sensational. The reality is much more prosaic – most women (including nurses) in Australia and elsewhere, are in prison for minor crimes – theft, petty larceny or drug related offences. In the late 19th and early 20th century NSW midwives and nurses were involved in abortion and some did go to prison. Crimes against the person are rare. For general information about the criminal and judicial system ‘Archives in Brief 31 – Supreme Court of NSW selected criminal records’ available at State Records Office of NSW. For more specific information on nurses and midwives involved in crime see Judith Allen Sex & Secrets: Crimes Involving Australian Women Since 1880, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1990.

Source: M Cordia, Nurses at Little Bay
Published Nursing/Midwifery History – Select List:


Armstrong, Dorothy Mary, *The First Fifty Years: A History of Nursing at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital*, Sydney, from 1882 to 1932, RPA Hospital Graduate Nurses’ Association, 1965.


Castle, Josephine, *Nursing at the Wollongong Hospital, 1926-1982*, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, 1984.


Crouch, Joan, *One life is ours: the story of Ada Joyce Bridge*, St Lukes Hospital, Nightingale Committee, Darlinghurst, NSW, 1989.

Downie, Angus, *Our first hundred years: the history of nursing at the Royal Hobart Hospital*, Royal Hobart Hospital, Hobart, 1975.


Goold, Sally S. & Liddle, Kerryanne, eds *In her own right: black Australian nurses' stories*, eContent Management, Sydney, 2009.


Potter, Lesley, ed *A passion to care: nursing and nurses Western Suburbs Hospital 1894-1982*, Western Suburbs Hospital Graduate Nurses’ Association, North Strathfield, NSW, 2008.


South Australian Trained Nurses’ Centenary Committee, *Nursing in South Australia, 1837-1937*, the Committee, Adelaide, c. 1946?


Nurse (who has been many hours on duty – to patient’s mother), “When do you think I shall be able to go to bed?”

Patient’s Mother, “Got to bed! I thought you were a trained nurse!”

*Punch, 1902*