

# IMPACT ON WORCESTER INFIRMARY

## DID IT MEASURE UP TO NIGHTINGALE'S STANDARDS?

Florence Nightingale's influence on nurse training was widespread, and Worcester Infirmary was no exception. In 1873 Earl Beauchamp visited London and contacted St. Thomas' Hospital. Shortly after returning to Worcester he received a letter from the secretary of the Nightingale Fund which suggested the upgrading of matrons. The recommendations of the trustees of the Nightingale Fund in this letter were submitted to the committee, and later that year the Worcester Infirmary agreed to them. At this time they also made nurses accountable to the Matron, not the House Surgeon as had been usual.

From 1874 the Worcester Infirmary introduced a comprehensive training scheme for nurses. 'They were paid £8 for the first year of their training, £12 for the second, £16 for the third, and if they remained a fourth year, £20. Bright and intelligent recruits were sought, but they had to be able to read and write...' writes McMenemy in *A History of the Worcester Royal Infirmary*.



## MARY HERBERT

Miss Mary Herbert was a graduate of the Nightingale School of Nursing and had also been Assistant Matron at St. Thomas' Hospital, London. She took the post of Matron at Worcester Infirmary in 1894. In 1907 she was interviewed by the Nursing Mirror and stated at that time there was a three-year nursing course in place at the infirmary. She stayed in the post until 1917.

"Miss Herbert was a splendid nurse, a good teacher and an able administrator. Her abilities were widely known and in 1903 she was invited to sit on the Nursing Board of the India Office. Great regret was expressed on her resignation from the infirmary in 1917, and she was presented on leaving with a handsome testimonial. Much does the Infirmary owe to her." McMenemy *A History of the Worcester Royal Infirmary*.

## THE HOSPITAL

The Worcester Infirmary Building was opened in 1770, 89 years before Florence Nightingale would write *Notes on Hospitals* and open her training school. Yet, some of the criteria she specified were already in place, including its large windows, long wards and highly polished floors. The location however, according to Nightingale, would have been largely unacceptable; the infirmary's proximity to the River Severn alone and the soil type of the surrounding area should, according to Nightingale, be avoided. Furthermore, a hospital built in the city amongst 'dense unhealthy populations' was not a wise choice due to unclean air from smoke and the city's inhabitants.

Taking a look at the infirmary's floor plans from 1870 of the basement and the Garret floor we can draw some comparisons to criteria set out by Nightingale in *Notes on Hospitals*. The labels below show features of the design that agree with (purple) or are contrary to (orange) Nightingale's specifications.

