

# DON'T MISS NIGHTINGALE!

■ International Nurses Day event 1997, Wellington, New Zealand ■

The [Nursing Education and Research Foundation](#) sponsored this event which was hosted by the Minister of Health in the Legislative Council Chamber at Parliament. NERF also sponsored a practice-based story series - "At the Heart of Nursing" - published in [Kai Tiaki: Nursing New Zealand](#), and that project was launched at a reception beforehand in the Great Hall by Brenda Wilson, [New Zealand Nurses Organisation](#) Executive Director and *Kai Tiaki* editors, Teresa O'Connor and Anne Manchester. Nurses were invited to attend the event in uniform or historic uniform.

After introductory remarks by the Master of Ceremonies, NZNO President Nigel Kee, the Minister of Health, Bill English paid tribute to Nightingale in a speech attentive and relevant to the purpose and import of the evening.

Lady Keith, as the co-writer of the presentation "Nightingale Recalled", gave a mihi welcoming those present to the gathering and the historic venue, and introduced the presentation which was given by Shelley Jones.

The presentation featured a recording of Florence Nightingale's voice, at which Nightingale (played by actor Vanessa Byrnes) herself appeared amongst us, sitting down to a desk to prepare her reports on her return from the Crimea and sharing her thoughts on nursing as expressed in her little book *Notes on Nursing*.

A letter to Nightingale - the winning entry in a New Zealand Post letter writing competition - written by a young person (Michelle Fox) provided a link to the International Council of Nurses' theme ***Healthy Young People = A Brighter Tomorrow***. Four nurses working with young people had been invited to give brief presentations about their work:

- Kelly Tikao (Kai Tahu, Kati Irakehu), RN, broadcaster, and presenter at Max TV
- Elizabeth Farrell, Coordinator, Public Health Nurse, South Auckland Health
- Bronwyn Dunnachie-McNatty, Nurse Specialist/Clinical Coordinator, Youth Specialty Services, Healthlink South
- Karyn Bycroft, Paediatric Oncology Community Nurse, Wellington Hospital, Capital Coast Health.

The presentation concluded with the suggestion that, were Nightingale recalled to service, her work to promote the health of young today would require the skills of nurses such as these, and that she would be drawing her research reports to the attention of the politicians of the day.

This version of the presentation omits some material (comparing contemporary nursing concepts with Nightingale's ideas) and does not include the presentations from the four nurses.

**PRE SHOW STATE**

Slide 1: Image of Nightingale<sup>1</sup>  
is on screen as people enter

1820 Upstairs gallery is seated

1825 Downstairs seating -  
VIPs to front

1830 Master of Ceremonies  
Nigel Kee (President,  
NZNO): thanks to  
Minister, welcome and  
opening remarks

1835 Minister of Health

1845 Presentation begins ►  
Introduction & Mihi (Lady Keith)

**NIGHTINGALE RECALLED**

by Shelley Jones and Jocelyn Keith CBE

My intention, in planning this evening, was that I would be sitting where you all are, and standing here, would be Lady Keith. I had planned that it would happen that way, not only because I would enjoy it more (sitting down), but also because of the considerable work Jocelyn has done on Nightingale's influence on nursing in New Zealand. However, she is tonight addressing the New Zealand Federation of University Women, and I am left to preach to the converted.

We have said to you, nurses and colleagues, "Don't Miss Nightingale", and you have taken that injunction to heart - you are here. And we have promised you, for your efforts, that you **shall** hear Florence Nightingale speak. Some of you have thought to ask how that might be done. The answer is simply that we have a recording of her voice, which we will hear shortly.

To hear Nightingale speak is the easy part, because while one imperative on International Nurses' Day is to honour Nightingale, the second is to give attention to the theme set by the International Council of Nurses. This year the theme is **Healthy Young People = A Brighter Tomorrow**. Linking Nightingale last century to the health of young people in the next (century) is no easy task, but links **will** be made. We will be hearing from four nurses working with young people, and in their work today, I believe we can see the Nightingale tradition, and the promise of nursing roles towards health for all. Are we still aiming for "Health for all by the year 2000?". The turn of the next century is almost upon us...

The recording we have of Florence Nightingale was probably made at the turn of this century, when Nightingale was in her 70s. And how, you might ask, did Nightingale get involved in this technological breakthrough?

Let me tell you how we have come by this recording. One day, Jocelyn's mother said to her that she'd heard Nightingale on the radio. "Mother, Nightingale is dead", said Jocelyn. But her mother insisted and partly to humour her, partly because her interest was piqued, Jocelyn wrote off to Radio New Zealand's sound archives. After many months, finally a letter came, yes there was a recording. But when and why and how was the recording made? Jocelyn's first theory was that perhaps Nightingale had addressed an International Council of Women's conference in London in 1899. Grace Neill from New Zealand had attended, and this particular year was historically significant because a nursing interest group formed at that conference became the International Council of Nurses. So it was certainly an occasion worth recording. But the sentiment of Nightingale's message seems to fit better with a second theory, which is that Edison, who invented the wax cylinder, which made possible a single unique recording, went on to invent the wherewithal for making multiple recordings. Apparently, Edison had the technology about 1899, and to demonstrate it, set about making recordings of famous people. Nightingale would have been close to eighty, and the record of her last going out visiting from her home was being

<sup>1</sup> By Perry Pictures [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AFlorence\\_Nightingale\\_1920\\_reproduction.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AFlorence_Nightingale_1920_reproduction.jpg)

1901, so she could have been out and about and off to the recording studio in 1899. Her message certainly anticipates our listening to her voice at a later time<sup>2</sup>. It's very brief, just 35 seconds long, and quite indistinct, so we have her words on a slide.

**CUE 1 ►**

- A Set tape going
  - B Slide 2: text on just the instant before her voice comes over
  - C Leave slide on
  - D Rewind tape
- Audience lights down, stage lights up

Slide 2

Here I am, no longer even a memory, just a name. I hope my voice brings to history the great work of my life. God bless my dear old comrades of Balaclava, and bring them safe to shore. Florence Nightingale.

The great work of her life, begun in the Crimea War, went on into her seventies and eighties. At the point at which this recording was made, she is probably nearly eighty, and many of her friends and colleagues have died. She is calling a blessing for the few that remain, and wishing them - safe to shore - for the final journey in death. Let's listen to her again....

**CUE 2 ►**

- A Replay tape
- B Slide black
- C 'Florence Nightingale' has entered the hall and walks to the front, speaking immediately after the recording.

[Nightingale]

I believe it's my birthday again! On account of my death in 1910, in my 90th year, why, this reckons to be my 177th anniversary!

The Florence Nightingale we have before us, is alive, but not well. The year is 1856. She has returned from the Crimea aged 36, her health broken, a driven spirit in an exhausted body.

**CUE 3 ►**

- A Nightingale sits at her desk
  - B Stage lights come up.
- Nightingale writes in her diary...

[Nightingale]

Oh my poor men, I am a bad mother to come home and leave you in Crimean graves - 73 percent in 8 regiments in 6 months from disease alone - who thinks of that now? (Smith 1950:256).

Cecil Woodham Smith, one of Nightingale's biographers, writes that the Crimean War had been discredited, and there was a universal wish to forget it. But not so, Nightingale, whose private notes record a turmoil.

[Nightingale]

I can never forget. I can never forget (Smith 1950:258).

For Nightingale, the preventable loss of life demanded reform of the British Army.

[Nightingale]

I stand at the altar of murdered men, and while I live I fight their cause (Smith 1950:259).

Her health, after debilitating illness in the Crimea, was shattered, and she believed she was going to die. All the more urgent, then, not to rest, as her family, her friends, an international chorus were imploring (Smith 1950:261).

[Nightingale]

If I fall out on the march, who would work the question of reform? (Smith 1950:262). If only I could carry one point which would prevent one part of the recurrence of the colossal calamity, then I should be true to the brave dead (Smith 1950:260).

Her experience with the military bureaucracy made her painfully aware that any scheme with which she was involved, would be made to fail:

[Nightingale]

...so great is the detestation with which I am regarded by the officials (Smith 1950:261).

<sup>2</sup> Reviewing this paper in 2016, I have learned the circumstances of the recording - it was made in 1890 [in support of the Light Brigade Relief Fund](#), and Hampshire County Council has a recording on their webpage [here](#).

A door opened, Queen Victoria "...wished to hear the story of Miss Nightingale's experiences with the army, not only officially but privately" (Smith 1950:263). Nightingale plunged into preparing facts and figures, tables and statistical comparisons - her plan was to do more than share her experiences but to ultimately gain a Royal Commission to examine the sanitary condition, administration and organisation of barracks and military hospitals and the organisation, education and administration of the Army Medical Department. Her meeting with the Queen and the Prince Consort was a success. The Prince recorded in his diary "She put before us all the defects of our present military hospital system and the reforms that are needed. We are much pleased with her; she is extremely modest" (Smith 1950:265). Queen Victoria wrote to the Commander in Chief, "I wish we had her at the War Office".

Nightingale, the Queen, the Prince Consort, met many times. [We believe t]here was another party to these meetings, one relevant to Nightingale's influence in New Zealand. That person, was Sir George Grey. As an aside, it is little known that Nightingale wrote in 1860, a report on Maori health: *Note on the New Zealand Depopulation Question* at the request of Sir George Grey, then Governor of New Zealand<sup>3</sup>.

However, constitutionally, "the Queen and Prince had no power to initiate action; that was exclusively in the hands of the Ministers of the Crown" (Smith 1950:265). In the meantime, she had written her own record of her work: *Notes on Matters Affecting the Health, Efficiency and Hospital Administration of the British Army*. She used the press in the form of one Harriet Martineau by sending her a copy of her report, and from it Martineau wrote a series of articles on the army which were published in the DAILY NEWS... (Smith 1950:316) She rewrote her report as a short popular version and published it anonymously as *A Contribution to the Sanitary History of the late War with Russia*. Nightingale was eventually awarded, after much politicking and stalling, a Royal Warrant to reform the army health services.

Although she had been frustrated in her work in the Crimea by the resistance of army officials, medical men and the misguided advocacy of supporters, she had been a heroine in the eyes of the British public. Her sister Parthenope had written to her in the Crimea "The people love you, with a kind of passionate tenderness that goes to the heart" (Smith 1950:234).

Even before she returned to England, a committee was formed, and a public meeting held "to give expression to a general feeling that the services of Miss Nightingale in the hospitals of the East demand the grateful recognition of the British people" (Smith 1950:236). The initial idea had been a gift in gold or silver suitably inscribed - "something" her sister said, "of the teapot and bracelet variety". But a huge sum of money was raised in her name - £44,000.00 (of which the New Zealand Government sent £1,000.00), and the Nightingale Fund was established. Only after the Royal Commission had finished its work could she give attention, somewhat reluctantly, to dealing with the fund. As you know, a school to train nurses was established at St Thomas's Hospital in 1859.

#### CUE 4 ►

Nightingale clears her desk,  
ready for next job...

However, before she began work on the school, she wrote a little text which was published in 1859. Although she intended it for the ordinary domestic situation of nursing in the home, her thoughts are fresh and relevant for today. Every nurse here will have heard of it:

[Nightingale, announcing to herself]  
*Notes on Nursing: What it is and What it is not.*

I do believe she is writing it as we speak... [a section of about 1000 words comparing contemporary nursing concepts with Nightingale's ideas is not included in this short version].  
...Nightingale had a clear sense of calling to her work - she expressed it as a call from God, and we might express a corresponding clarity of purpose as career commitment. She preempted

<sup>3</sup> The connection between Grey and Nightingale is established in the public record with the Colonial Office possibly the conduit - on page 411 of *The Life and Times of Sir George Grey, Volume 2* by William Lee Rees and Lily Rees (1892/2011, Cambridge University Press), it is noted that Grey had a letter from Nightingale dated July 1893 in which she speaks of spending the past two years working up a report on the mortality of native races from statistics obtained from the Colonial Office, and that she had 'prepared some exhaustive notes on the New Zealand depopulation question'. The [General Catalogue of Grey Collection Free Public Library Auckland 1888](#) lists this entry "1860—Nightingale, Florence. (Notes on the New Zealand Depopulation Question)." But there were other connections, for instance, first cousins of Nightingale were amongst the members of exploration parties led by Grey in Western Australia and Nightingale and Grey were friends, according to *'A Terrible and Fatal Man': Sir George Grey* by Bernard Cadogan (2014) Treaty Research Series, Treaty of Waitangi Research Unit, Stout Research Centre, Wellington.

numerous sociological analyses of what constitutes a profession when she wrote about the self-directedness of the professional nurse and the internalisation of a standard:

[Nightingale]

What is it to feel a calling for any thing? Is it not to do your work in it to satisfy your own high idea of what is the right, the best, and not because you will be “found out” if you don’t do it? This is the “enthusiasm” which every one, from a shoemaker to a sculptor, must have, in order to follow his “calling” properly. Now the nurse has to do, not with shoes, or with chisel and marble, but with human beings; and if she, for her own satisfaction, does not look after her own patients, no telling her will make her capable of doing so (Nightingale 1859:128).

Florence Nightingale’s sense of purpose, her enthusiasm, her understanding of the importance of her own work and its value to society continues to inspire nurses. And it inspires at least **one young person** in New Zealand. We might have tried to tell you what Nightingale thought of young people, but instead, we have the answer to a different question “What do young people think of Nightingale?”

#### CUE 5 ►

Slide 3 of Michelle Fox appears as her name is mentioned.

New Zealand Post recently ran a letter writing competition in which under fifteens could enter a letter they’d written to someone they admired. The winning letter? To Florence Nightingale, from Michelle Fox, aged 11, Form 2 Room 4 at Takapuna Normal Intermediate. This is Michelle, as she was photographed by the New Zealand Herald, who have kindly permitted the use of the photograph. Michelle’s letter is addressed to Nightingale, on her return from the Crimea.

#### CUE 6 ►

Nightingale picks up letter from desk, opens it and stands to read or stands during the reading, turning around to face the audience. Nightingale walks out at the end of the letter, turning to look up at the slide of Michelle, as if leaving the room for something.

[Nightingale, reading from letter]

Dear Florence Nightingale, Nurse to soldiers,  
I am writing this letter to you, because I really admire you in lots of ways. Like how you showed the world that nursing isn’t a low-down career for women of questionable reputation. In Victorian England not so many years ago, well born ladies like yourself did not become nurses. I really admire the way that you stood up to your family and others, and even though lots of people were against you, you did not give up nor abandon the job that God had set you. As well as all this, you improved sanitation during the Crimean War... no more will the hospital be a dirty filthy place with women with low morals working in it, thanks to you, Florence. You have changed the face of nursing.  
God Bless You  
Yours sincerely  
Michelle Fox.

Of course, the bit about the low morals was the bit the Herald quoted too!

In the words of the biographer Cecil Woodham Smith, “Miss Nightingale had stamped the profession of nurse with her own image” (Smith 1950:257).

We have here tonight, four nurses who have the same clarity of vision as had Nightingale. They have the same sense of commitment, the same enthusiasm and although it is hard to imagine anyone having the energy Nightingale did, they are energetic. Their focus tonight, and also in their daily work, is **Healthy Young People = A Brighter Tomorrow**.

#### PRESENTATIONS ►

These four nurses were invited to present on their work with young people. Their presentations are not available.

#### Kelly Tikao

RN, broadcaster, formerly at radio “Rampage”

A radio show produced by Kelly won the NZ Aids Foundation Media Awards, we’ll hear a recording of the winning programme. Has worked as a nurse with people with AIDS, and has returned from overseas travel to take a position with Max TV.

#### Elizabeth Farrell

Coordinator, Public Health Nurse, South Auckland Health

Involved in the sore throat clinic initiative in which school children (mostly intermediate up) are

monitored for streptococcal throat infections and treated to prevent the complications of rheumatic fever, i.e. heart valve damage

### **Bronwyn Dunnachie-McNatty**

Nurse Specialist/Clinical Coordinator, Youth Services, Healthlink South

Special interest is depressed young people (remember NZ's high rate of youth suicide) and is involved in a programme in which young people at risk of depression are identified and referred to the service.

### **Karyn Bycroft**

Paediatric oncology community nurse specialist

Works across home-hospital boundary with young people with cancer, and their families. Some of these young people will die, others will survive their cancer, and need to readjust to a "normal" life.

## **END OF PRESENTATIONS**

### **CUE 7 ►**

Nightingale enters with red book, opens it to a reference she wants, sits down at desk again, to scribe away

Were Nightingale recalled to service, were she really amongst us today - what would she be doing?

Although she obviously was persuaded to record her voice for posterity, she shunned publicity in her lifetime. She knew that public opinion was formed by the media, and she knew how to reach the public through the media. She also knew that public opinion influences political decisions. The mass media of her time was the printed word and she used it with great skill, in our time the mass media are radio, television and Nightingale is already on the internet.

Nightingale would be drawing together, as she did for the Royal Commission on army reform, a representative team of knowledgeable health professionals. We think her plan would be to maximise the underused potential of nursing in health promotion with young people. While we do not think she would say that **only** nurses have influence with young people, she'd be recruiting skilled and committed nurses like Kelly, Elizabeth, Bronwyn and Karyn. May I remind you that all these nurses have undertaken further study in their field.

### **CUE 8 ►**

Kelly, Elizabeth, Bronwyn and Karyn go to stand behind FN

Nightingale would have access to more accurate statistics than she had for her report to Sir George Grey. She might be updating the conclusions she reached in that report *Note on the New Zealand Depopulation Question*. But it's more likely that she'd be writing a new report:

### **CUE 9 ►**

Nightingale, looking at her page...

[Nightingale]

*Notes to Promote the Health of Young People in Aotearoa.*

She'd be seeking an audience with the Ministers of Health and Youth Affairs and maybe the Minister of Broadcasting as well, to put to them her findings from her report and her strategic plan. No, that's not right. Remember that Nightingale worked from home, and thus she was able to receive official visitors on her own terms.

### **CUE 10 ►**

Nightingale looks up to catch Bill English's eye, and allows the tiniest smile before looking back down to her work.

It would be the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Youth Affairs, knocking on Nightingale's door.

Thank you.

## **REFERENCES**

NIGHTINGALE Florence (1859/1952) *Notes on Nursing*. Duckworth : London

SMITH Cecil Woodham (1950) *Florence Nightingale 1820-1910*. Constable : London