

Registration Timeline

1874 - The President of the General Medical Council, Dr Henry Acland, suggested the introduction of a nurses' register in his foreword to *Handbook for Ward Sisters* by Florence Lee.

1887 - The Hospital's Association, founded by financier and philanthropist Henry Burdett, held a meeting to discuss a register for nurses. A breakaway group formed after the meeting due to disagreements over the style of the register, particularly between Ethel Gordon Fenwick and Burdett. Fenwick believed a non-compulsory register, which the Hospital Association advocated, was little more than a list which would achieve nothing for nursing.

21st November 1887 - The newly formed breakaway group held their first meeting at the home of Ethel Gordon Fenwick at 20 Wimpole Street London.

7th December 1887 - British Nursing Association is formed, large numbers of matrons from London teaching hospitals make up its council. Ethel Gordon Fenwick's husband, Dr Bedford Fenwick is its president. The BNA opened a register two years later in 1889. This register was not legally binding and nurses had no obligation to join it.

1889 - The British Medical Association passed a resolution which called for the opening of a register for nurses.

1893 - The BNA is granted a Royal Charter becoming the Royal British Nursing Association, but still had no authority to form a compulsory nurses' register.

1894 - Ethel Gordon Fenwick formed the Matron's Council of Great Britain with her supporters to continue the registration campaign.

1902 - The Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses was established.

1903 and 1904 - Both the Royal British Nurses' Association and the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses presented bills to parliament proposing the introduction of a nurses register, both fail.

24th June 1904 - A Select Committee was set up to debate nurse registration. It published a preliminary report and planned to reconvene in the following year.

1905 - The Select Committee reconvenes and concludes in favour of the introduction of the State Registration of nurses.

1905-1910 - During this five year period, several bills for registration are presented to Parliament but are all blocked by anti-registrationists.

1910 - Ethel Gordon Fenwick united the The British Medical Association; The Royal British Nurses' Association; The Matrons' Council; The Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses; the Fever Nurses' Association; The Irish Nurses' Association; The Scottish Nurses Association and the Association of the promotion of the registration of nurses in Scotland, to form the Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses.

1919 - Both the Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses and the Royal College of Nursing presented bills to parliament, but both sides were asked to withdraw. The Minister of Health Dr Addison, went on to present a bill on 6 November. It underwent its second reading on November 22nd and was passed as the Nurses' Registration Act in December 1919.

1920 - The first General Nursing Council, commonly referred to as the 'Caretaker Council', was appointed by the Minister Health. They met to discuss the standard requirements to qualify as a state registered nurse. They agreed in the Summer of 1920 that to be admitted to register, aspiring nurses had to be over 21, be able to give three references of good character, and able to demonstrate that they had had at least one years training and two years subsequent practice prior to 1 November 1919. The Council also decide on disciplinary procedures, creating the Disciplinary and Penal Cases Committee. The Committee had the power to discipline nurses who violated standards of practice.

September 1921 - The Nursing Register opened, irrevocably changing modern British nursing. Ethel Gordon Fenwick was the first to sign the register, becoming 'State Registered Nurse number one'.

Adapted from Christine Hallett and Hannah Cooke (2011) Historical Investigations into the Professional Self-Regulation of Nursing and Midwifery: 1860-2002. Manchester University Press, held in the Nursing and Midwifery Council, p. 39.