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Volume II

**NURSES FOOTPRINTS**  
**BAHAMAS**

Up to 1983 Plus

by

Hilda V. Bowen, M.B.E.

October, 1993

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## INTRODUCTION *Cont'd*

If some of them were shown the letter of appointment it would not have made any difference to their attitude, black nursing sister, no can do. It was obvious that the action taken by the Governor Sir Robert Neville to break down barrier or what you would wish to call it was not known.

Within a few days after arrival an interview with Miss Denise Dane the Matron of the Bahamas General Hospital took place. The date and time to report for duty as Nursing Sister in charge of Out-Patient and Casualty Department with responsibility for the Eye Clinic was set. Other relevant matters were discussed.

Following the interview, a tour of the hospital with Ms. Dane who introduced members to a number of medical, nursing and other disciplines who were met on route.

The tour ended in the Doctor's Lounge where tea was served to doctors and nursing sisters on duty.

Arrangements for transport was made by Matron to take me back home to Cunningham Lane.

### – THE FIRST DAY –

At 8 a.m. Monday, October 5, 1953, the arrival of the Bahamian Sister at the front entrance of the Bahamas General Hospital brought staff and others from all directions into the front hall all, eyes were focused on the head piece the Nursing Sister's Veil. On entry to the Matron's Office there were a few Nursing Sisters who awaited the return to the office in order to receive the hospital night report. Introduction to all present was made prior to the reading of the report.

Approximately at 9:00 a.m. Matron Dane arrived who after receiving a brief report from the Night Sister led the way to the Out-Patient and Casualty building.

Activities during the first day included the introduction by Matron to the medical nursing and other staff during an inspection of the Out-Patient and Casualty Department and other departments located within the building. Example, Relieving Office, X-Ray, Ambulance and Dental.

On route to the Chief Medical Officer's office, the main Dispensary was toured and staff was introduced. The next stop was the historical building, Board of Health built in 1902.

The office of the Chief Medical Officer the Health Board Room and the Public Health Department were located on the top floor. After the introduction to the Chief Medical Officer Dr. Norman McClennan in discussion he pointed the difference of the role of the Nursing Sister in the United Kingdom and in the Bahamas with special mention of the lack of Medical Staff (Doctors).

The next office visited was that of the Hospital Superintendent Mr. Hubert Knowles situated on the ground floor.

## INTRODUCTION *Cont'd*

On the ground floor were the office of the Hospital Superintendent and Biological Laboratory.

During the visit with the hospital Superintendent the arrangement in relation to transportation was made known by him without reference to living accommodations. No request for accommodation was made at that time. However, within the year after the study of the condition of Service for recruited Nursing Sisters an application was submitted and resulted in the payment of living out allowances of £20 per month.

Grape vine news revealed that five of the six Nursing Sisters employed (95%) had plan to tender letters of resignation if accommodation in the Sisters residence (mess) was offered to the Bahamian Sisters.

On arrival at the Doctors Lounge at approximately 11:00 a.m. an introduction to all present was made by the Matron. Facial expressions spoke louder than words. The attitude displayed was contrary to the one I experienced studying in England.

Following this coffee break at the Doctor's Lounge, I returned to the Out-Patient and Casualty Department. The crowd in the waiting room were far less than the crowd seen before the tour. Among those in the waiting room were newspaper reporters from the local paper and Ms. Heather Woods from Z.N.S., who wanted an interview which took place before lunch.

On return to the Department at approximately 2:00 p.m. about two hours was spent with Mrs. Rosa Major, the Senior Staff Nurse at the Department getting necessary information.

At 4:00 p.m. Sister Mary Hughes arrived and invited me to join the Sisters at the Nurses Graduation Exercise which was held in the classroom located in the basement of the hospital. Lady Neville the Governor's wife made the presentation of Certificates, pins and prizes to the graduates. The Lady Neville Challenge Cup was presented to Nurse Naomi Bain.

At the end of the Matron's Report she announced the historical event that a Bahamian Nursing Sister had joined the staff. Everyone applauded.

A Tea Party for those present followed. As the end of the first day was drawing to a close it marked the beginning of thirty-one years of nursing service as a Nursing Sister, Matron and Principal Matron/Director of Nursing.

To God be the glory.

Suggested for reading on activities etc. on Nursing

- (1) Birds Eye View, Nurses Footprints
- (2) Volume One, Nurses Footprints

**POSITIONS HELD IN THE BAHAMAS PUBLIC SERVICE**

1. 1942 - 1949: Teacher, Eastern Junior School, Nassau, Bahamas
2. 1947 - 1950: General Nursing, Student Nurse, Farnborough Hospital, Kent, England.
3. 1950 - 1951: Ophthalmic Nursing, Moorfield Eye Hospital, London Ophthalmic Nursing Certificate and Diploma.
4. 1952: Part I Midwifery, Elsie Inglis Maternity Hospital, Edinburgh, Scotland.  
Six Months
5. 1952: Part II Midwifery, Stirling Royal Infirmary, Stirlingshire, Scotland.  
Six Months
6. 5th Oct., 1953: Nursing Sister, Bahamas General Hospital, Bahamas.  
1950/57 Royal College Nursing London Hospital Administrator Course.
7. Aug., 1959: Assistant Matron, Princess Margaret Hospital.
8. 1962: Matron, Princess Margaret Hospital, Bahamas.
9. 1965: Principal Matron, Ministry of Health, Bahamas.
10. 1970: Chief Nursing Officer, Ministry of Health & National Insurance, Bahamas.
11. 1980: Director of Nursing, Ministry of Health, Bahamas.  
Sept., 1983:
12. 1971 - 1976: Chairman, Nursing Council, Commonwealth of the Bahamas.
13. 1977: Member, Nursing Council, Commonwealth of the Bahamas.
14. 1978 - 1983: Chairman, Nursing Council, Commonwealth of the Bahamas.
15. 1965: Nursing Superintendent Bahamas Branch, British Red Cross Society Honorary, Vice President of Bahamas Branch of British Red Cross.
16. 1970: Member of Steering Committee, Regional Nursing Body.
17. 1980: Temporary Nursing Advisor World Health and Pan American.
18. 1969 M.B.E. For development of Nursing in the Bahamas awarded by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth.

*Bromley Group Hospital Management Committee*



**Farnborough Hospital, Farnborough, Kent**

*This is to Certify that*

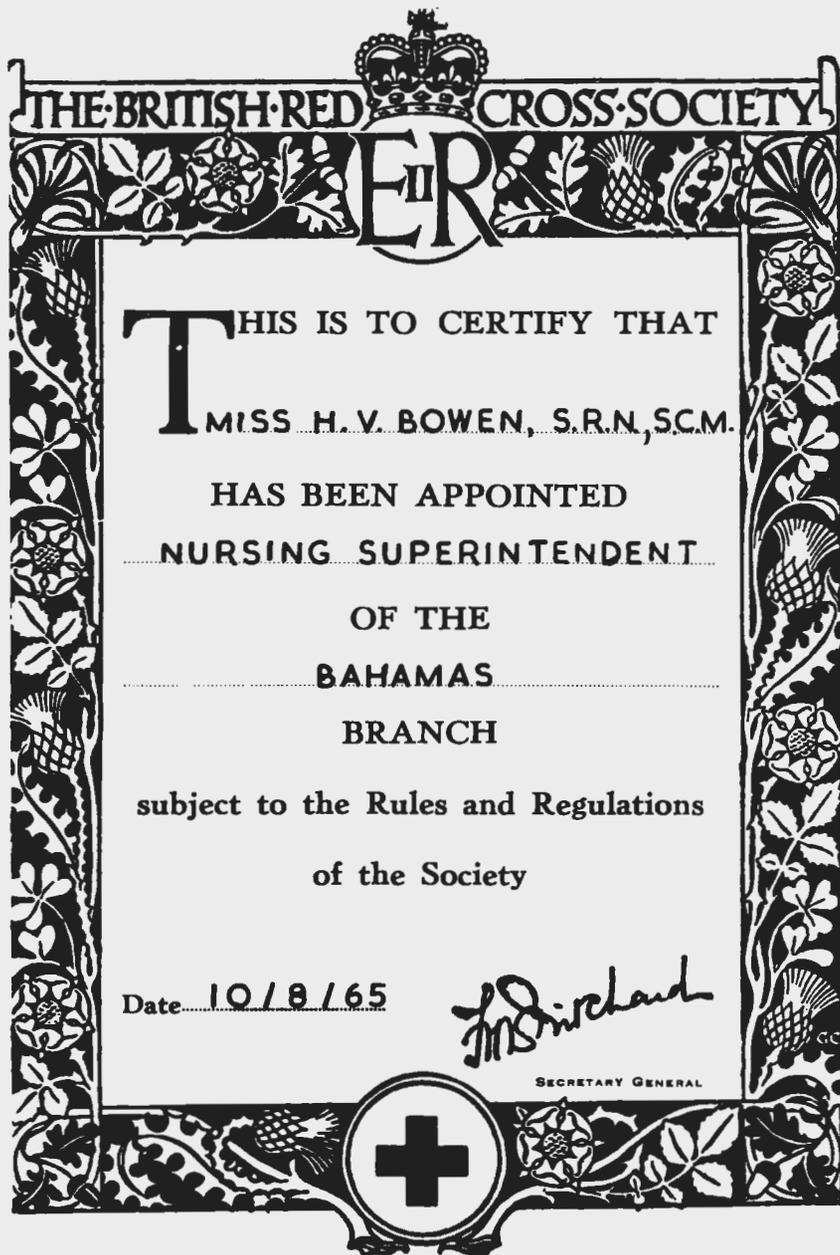
**Hilda Bowen**

*has completed a course of three years' training in Medical and Surgical Nursing and has passed the examinations of the Hospital.*

*Arthur Gifford*  
Chairman, Bromley Group Hospital Management Committee

*E. C. Peake*  
Matron, Farnborough Hospital

*Date* **September 30<sup>th</sup> 1980**



THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT  
**T**MISS H. V. BOWEN, S.R.N., S.C.M.  
HAS BEEN APPOINTED  
NURSING SUPERINTENDENT  
OF THE  
BAHAMAS  
BRANCH  
subject to the Rules and Regulations  
of the Society

Date 10/8/65

*M. Sinclair*  
SECRETARY GENERAL

ROYAL COLLEGE  OF NURSING

Founded 1916 Incorporated by Royal Charter 1928

This is to Certify  
that

*Hilda Valeria Barnice Bowen*

has completed a course of theoretical and practical instruction in  
Nursing Administration (Hospital)

from *September 1956* to *July 1957* In addition she has satisfied the  
Examiners in the following subjects:—

*Hospital Administration*  
*Training School Administration*  
*Nutrition and Catering*  
*Growth of the Nursing School*

*U. A. Woodman*  
Chairman of Council.

*Mary E. Carpenter*  
Director in the Education Department.

Reg. No. 168764

It is hereby Certified that

Hilda Bowen

was admitted by Examination to the General part of the Register maintained by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, on

3rd April 1950

and that she is entitled in pursuance of the Nurses Acts, 1919 to 1949, to take and use the title of "Registered Nurse" without limit of time.

*Dorothy M. Smith SRN.*  
Chairman of Council

The Seal of the Council was hereunto affixed this 25<sup>th</sup> day of August 1950.

*M. Henry SRN.*  
Registrar.

The Nursing Sister establishment in 1953 to 1954 included the following who were responsible to the Matron – Miss Denise Dane M.B.E.

Females:

Ms. Phyllis Aldridge	–	On sick leave in U.K.
Ms. Patricia Okeefe	–	Private Ward
Miss Mary Hughes	–	Maternity Ward
Miss Mould	–	Children
Miss Patricia Matthews	–	Operating Theatre
Miss Eileen O'Connell	}	Male & Female Medical Co.
Ms. Victoria Lee		Surgical Wards
Miss Hilda V. Bowen	–	Outpatients Department and Casualty
Miss Mary Bakewell	–	Classroom
Male: Mr. Reginald Gale	–	Mental Wards

Rotation for night duty and Prospect Hospital see page 22 of Birds Eye View Nursing Footprints.

Additional Staff for Night Duty:

3 Charge Nurses – Prospect Hospital – PMH – Female Mental Ward  
1 Ward Master – Male Mental Ward  
Third year student Nurse and Pupil Midwives were in charge of Wards assisted by Auxiliaries.

One Medical Officer was on call for Public Wards and Emergency, admitted to Casualty.

The surgeon and doctor in charge of Maternity and Children's Wards were called for patients requiring their care.

Private doctors were on call for private patients.

– DUTIES OF A NURSING SISTER IN 1953 –

The Nursing Sister was responsible to the Matron for the day to day administration of a ward or department from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; the Nursing care of the patients and the clinical training of student nurses and pupil midwives, welfare of patients and staff.

On allocation for the late shift i.e. 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. weekly additional responsibility included the other wards and departments of the Bahamas General Hospital including the Male and Female Mental Wards on the Crazy Hill within the compound and Prospect Hospital, formerly the RAF Hospital, where the Geriatric and Isolation Patients were hospitalized prior to the building of the Geriatric Hospital and the George VI Chest Wing.

The day staff reported off-duty at 4:30 p.m. and those allocated for evening duty reported off at 8:00 a.m. The establishment of trained staff for late shift consisted of:

- 1 Nursing Sister
  - 1 Charge Nurse for Bahamas General Hospital
  - 1 Ward Master for Male Mental Ward
  - 1 Charge Nurse for the Female Mental Ward
  - 1 Charge Nurse for Prospect Hospital
- Auxiliaries and attendants were allocated to all wards and departments.

Other staff on call:

- 1 Medical Officer for the Casualty and Public Wards
- 1 X-Ray Technician
- 1 Lab Technician

The surgeon and doctor in charge of Children and Maternity Wards were called when required.

Private doctors for those patients warded on the Private Ward.

Duties during the 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. shift:

The minimum of two rounds at the Bahamas General Hospital and at the Mental Wards Prospect Hospital when it was necessary. Required to be present at all deliveries on the Maternity Ward when possible, a visit to all mothers and babies within the hour after delivery.

Nursing Administrative duties included:

Writing of the Hospital Report on security  
Admissions and discharges during the day.

Making the necessary arrangements for emergency flights.

Reporting to Chief Medical Officer, Matron on any matters of importance.

Contact relatives of patients and hospital chaplain when necessary.

Welfare of Nursing Staff.

The Nursing Sister on night duty i.e. 11:00 p.m. to 9:00 a.m., duties were similar to that of the late shift. With addition to the Night Report for the hospital a special report was prepared for the Chief Medical Officer with the twenty-four hour statistical report and admission/discharge slips.

The Nursing Sister was allocated for night duty twice a year for a period of fourteen days.

It is of interest to note the following:

The main entrance to the hospital and ambulance doors were not locked. One porter sat in the main hall.

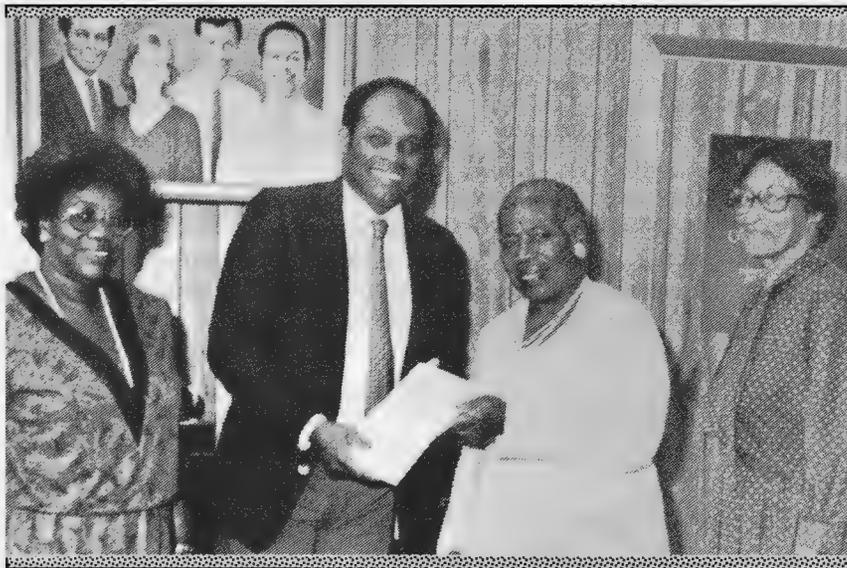
The police control car kept surveillance.

It was safe to walk from the main building to the Out Patients alone or drive to Prospect Hospital.

Dangerous were rounds of the Mental Wards, very few rounds were completed without being drenched with urine or face covered with spit. Rooms were over crowded often a patient might be found hanging from the ceiling.

## AMONG THOSE WHO WERE INTRODUCED TO ME DURING THE TOURS WERE MANY WHO ARE DECEASED:

DR. HUGGINS – Surgeon  
DR. CARNIL GORDON – Obstetrician  
DR. WALTER LORENZ  
DR. HENRY PODLESWKI – Psychiatrist  
DR. STANLEY MACMAHNON  
MR. HUBERT KNOWLES – Hospital Superintendent  
MR. GEORGE BERTRAM STRACHAN – Chief Pharmacist  
MR. CLEMENT MAYNARD NOW SIR CLEMENT – Chief Lab Tech.  
MR. HENRY TAYLOR NOW SR. HENRY – Public Health Department  
MR. RODRICK SIMMS – Relieving Officer  
MR. MICHAEL MARTINBOROUGH – Transport Chief  
MR. JOHN CLEARE – Ambulance Driver  
MRS. MALONE – Chief Telephonist  
MRS. DELORIS ALBURY – Telephonist  
MRS. BEDFORD – House Keeper  
MS. PAT STUART – Telephonist  
MR. FARQUHARSON – Head of the Maintenance Department  
MR. J. DEAN – Chief Electrician  
MR. THADEUS DARLING – Physiotherapist  
SENIOR STAFF NURSES INCLUDED:  
MRS. HAZEL DARLING – Operating Theatre  
MRS. ALBERTHA MOXEY – Maternity Ward  
MS. SYBIL CAREY – Children's Ward  
MRS. NAOMI ALBURY – Private Ward  
OTHER STAFF:  
MR. VERNAL ADDERLEY – In charge of Hospital Dispensary  
MRS. LOCKHART – Head Cook  
MRS. NORMA ALLEN – Blood Bank  
PRIVATE NURSE NORA SYMONETTE  
PRIVATE DOCTORS EARDLEY AND DR. POAD.  
MR. NESBITT – HEAD GARDENER  
MS. CAROLINE BURNSIDE – Physiotherapist  
MS. KATHLEEN ALBURY – CMO Secretary  
MS. EMILY GIBSON – Matron Secretary  
THE NURSES WARDEN



**Presentation of Birds Eye View of Nurses Footprints to former Minister of Health, Mr. Charles Carter Director of Nursing, Mrs. I. Baker, Mr. Carter, Permanent Secretary, Mrs. E. Isaacs.**



**Bahamian Red Cross Fair March 1975 Icecream Stall of the Matron and Nursing Sisters for many years Pictured: Miss Bowen Mrs. Beverley Ford The late Mrs. Eloise Penn in background Staff Nurse Samuels.**



**Photo taken in Matron's Office, Princess Margaret Hospital.**



**View: Western and Southern side of Out Patient and Casualty Dept. in 1953, Princess Margaret Hospital, formerly known as Bahamas General Hospital.**



Female Lunatic Ward, Crazy Hill, Princess Margaret Hospital Compound. Male Lunatic Ward was located on the Crazy Hill sight of Chief Medical Officer residence on the Crazy Hill. (See Birds Eye View, Page 2).



Gate House at Shirley Street Entrance of the Princess Margaret Hospital

## CEES HONOUREES

The College of the Bahamas Continuing Education and Extension Services Division salutes retired Educators for their valuable contribution in the field of Adult Education.

The Ginton family congratulates Miss Althea Mortimer:

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Congratulations to Mr. Patrick Bethel and Mr. Cecil Bethel.

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Best wishes and congratulations to Mrs. Corrine Thompson from Claude Williams.

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Mr. Haldane Chase and The Poiter family extend best wishes to Miss Emma Poiter.

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Paula and Leroy Mitchell and family congratulate Miss Hilda Bowen.



MISS ALTHEA MORTIMER



MR. PATRICK BETHEL



MR. CECIL BETHEL



MRS. CORRINE THOMPSON



MISS EMMA POITER



MISS HILDA BOWEN

Mr. Cecil Bethel was Teacher at Government High School  
at the time Hilda Bowen was a student  
1939 - 1941

THANKS TO: MRS. JOANN FRANCIS AND MS. KADRIA SEARS OF THE NASSAU GUARDIAN (1844) LTD.