

My gratitude to the American Association for the History of Nursing (AAHN) for awarding me the H15 grant, which enabled me to travel to the USA in May 2022. I am currently researching Jewish refugees who fled Nazi Europe and entered the nursing profession in Britain from 1938. Some of the young women who used this route of escape and financial independence were nurses in Germany and Austria before their exile. Others were students, some of whom were studying medicine. Some came to Britain as part of the Kindertransport or on domestic service visas and then entered nursing when they were old enough and visa restrictions were relaxed in the war years. The British Government did not offer these visas out of purely altruistic concern. Middle-class women in Britain struggled to recruit domestic servants and hospital matrons struggled to recruit and retain nurses. By supporting young Jewish women to flee Nazi oppression via these routes, Britain could appear generous, whilst solving staffing crises.

My trip to the States was delayed by a year because of Covid, so it was a great relief when the worst of the pandemic was over and I was eventually able to visit. The research trip was divided into two archive visits: the Barbara Bates Center for the Study of the History of Nursing at the University of Pennsylvania and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington DC.

The Barbara Bates Center maintains the archive of the International Council of Nurses: nurse refugee files from 1945-1969. This fascinating collection comprises correspondence with the ICN and other documentation from refugees across the globe as they attempted to validate their nursing credentials. Given my research into Jewish refugees, I focused on those women for this research visit. The stories are harrowing but demonstrate the resilience of the nurses.

The refugees' papers highlight the value of being a nurse to their survival, but their attempts in credentialing their training were often unsuccessful. One such document acknowledged the:

Receipt of an application for registration as a registered nurse submitted by a refugee, which shows she completed a three year course in nursing at the Jewish Hospital, Budapest, Hungary in May 1942. She stated her original diploma was taken away from her while she was a prisoner in a concentration camp.

The refugee then sent a further letter stating that her, 'Diploma was taken away while being a prisoner in concentration camp at Auschwitz. I tried to obtain a copy of my diploma without results as the Hospital records were destroyed during the war.' The ICN whilst sympathetic to her case, would not credential her nursing. The case was closed on 30 July 1962, with the decision that whilst her suffering in Auschwitz would have been great, 'suffering is no substitute for training.'

This work is still in progress whilst I complete my present study. It will however form a paper, probably next year on the personal narratives and experiences of Jewish refugee nurses in the international arena.

The second part of my trip to the USA was the archival visit to the USHMM. The archives are held outside Washington and are not easy to access on public transport. However, once there, the archivists could not have been more helpful. The purpose of this visit was to review the memoir of Margaret Hodge (Pogorzelski). Hodge started her nurse training at the Jewish Hospital in Berlin, where she admitted they were relatively safe. Again, I was struck by the safety net that being a nurse

provided. The Jewish Hospital in Berlin remained open throughout the war enabling some Jewish nurses and doctors to survive. The hospital provided healthcare to 'non-Aryans' (those Germans who had one Jewish grandparent) and those Jews married to 'Aryans'. These groups were not subject to the same level of persecution as 'full-Jews' but could not be treated in an 'Aryan' hospital. Despite the relative safety the hospital offered, Hodge knew she was not completely safe. She fled to England in 1939 and entered nurse training at St James's Hospital in Leeds, in the north of England. When France fell to Germany in the spring of 1940, most male Jewish refugees and some women were interned on the Isle of Man - some for many months. Until I located Hodge's memoir, I had only found one other nurse to whom this had happened. Finding Hodge's narrative about her internment was a valuable adjunct to the story.

Hodge's narrative is included in my monograph on Jewish refugee nurses, currently being written. During my work for the monograph the world has been in the grip of refugee crises on many fronts. In 2015, it was estimated that there were sixty-five million refugees across the globe, a figure that approximates to one in every one hundred and thirteen people world-wide. Increasing numbers of refugees are women who are more likely to experience gender-based violence and precarious conditions. Yet this crisis has not equated to concerns for humanity from the liberal democracies. Indeed, mirroring the response to Jewish refugees, pre-Second World War, liberal democracies continue to harden their borders. As Holocaust historian Tony Kushner argues, 'Isolationism and the attack of the "enemy within" and the "enemy without" in the form of the illegal/criminal "alien"', were critical features in the successful 'Brexit' campaign in the United Kingdom (UK).

The British nursing profession itself has not been immune from such divisive tropes. Both *Nursing Times* and *Nursing Standard* published reports revealing the nascent racism in the nursing profession and the nation's cared-for population. I hope that my monograph on Jewish refugees in Britain in the 1930s and 40s, will speak to the profession about the needs to understand the impact of an anti-migrant narrative that fails to acknowledge the multiplicity of diasporic identities. This plea goes to the public and health professionals across the globe as we are charged with caring for and with, those who might discriminate against migrant nurses.

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Her current research project, which examines Jewish refugees who fled Nazi Europe and entered the nursing profession in Britain from 1938, has been supported by both the Barbara Brodie Fellowship from the Eleanor Crowder Bjoring Center for Historical Nursing Inquiry and the AAHN H15 grant. For more detail about Dr Brooks's publications and research interests

see: <https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/jane.brooks.html#:~:text=Biography,as%20a%20lecturer%20of%20nursing>.