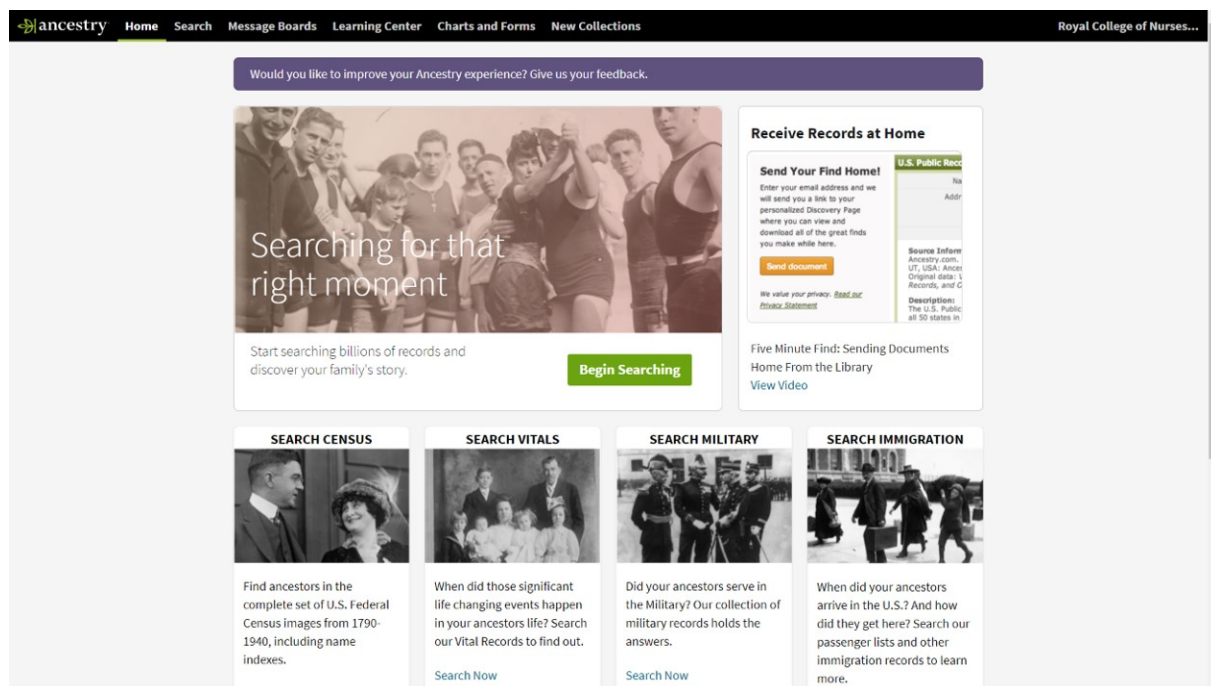# How to search the nursing registers on Ancestry

In 2016, the RCN Archive copies of the GNC Registers were digitised via Ancestry; and contain over 1.6 million names. It is the largest set of historic information on a single profession available in the UK.

By limiting your search to the nursing registers, you will get better results which are easier to browse.

The Register was an annual publication. For many years an individual nurse's name appeared every year – Ancestry have stripped out most of these 'duplicate' entries from the index. You can browse by year to check for specific names in specific years – you may be able to see the name in the digital copy even if it does not appear in the index.

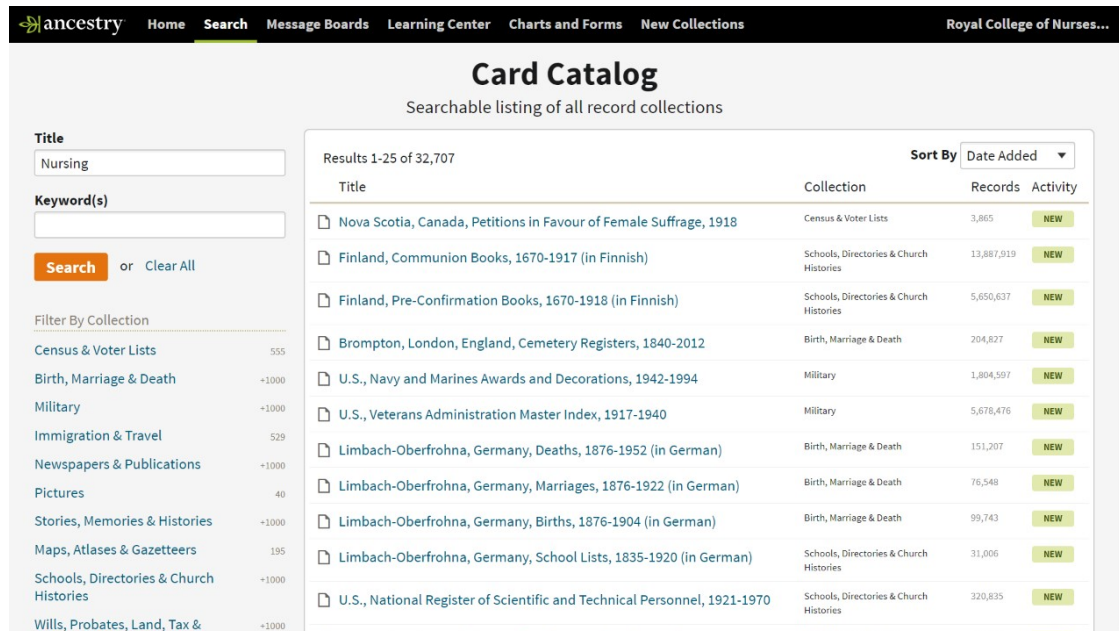## How to search the registers by personal name

Go to **Ancestry** www.ancestry.co.uk

Click on the **Search** tab in the menu (top left).

Click on **card catalogue** and Search for **Title = Nursing.** You will get these results.

Note - If you are looking for a midwife carry out the 'Nursing' Search first; most midwives were required to first qualify as a nurse. Then repeat this step but search for **Title = Midwives** and you will be able to search the Roll of Midwives.

Most queries will be resolved by choosing **UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1898-1968**

This collection includes the General Nursing Council Register, the Royal College of Nursing's 1920s register, and some early Burdett lists of nurses.

You can search by name, which is useful if you are searching for a known individual.

Here's an example: Sarah Swift: Enter first name Sarah Last name Swift.

Use the dates and places to help you identify the right person.

When you click on 'view record', at the top of the frame, it will tell you the date of the volume you are looking at.

This is the College of Nursing (later the RCN)'s membership register which contains thousands of entries. It covers 1916-1919, the years just before the Nurses Registration Act was passed.

Sarah Swift was Registered number 1, given in recognition of her commitment to the College and the campaign for the state registration of nurses.

The register gives home address and importantly where she trained.

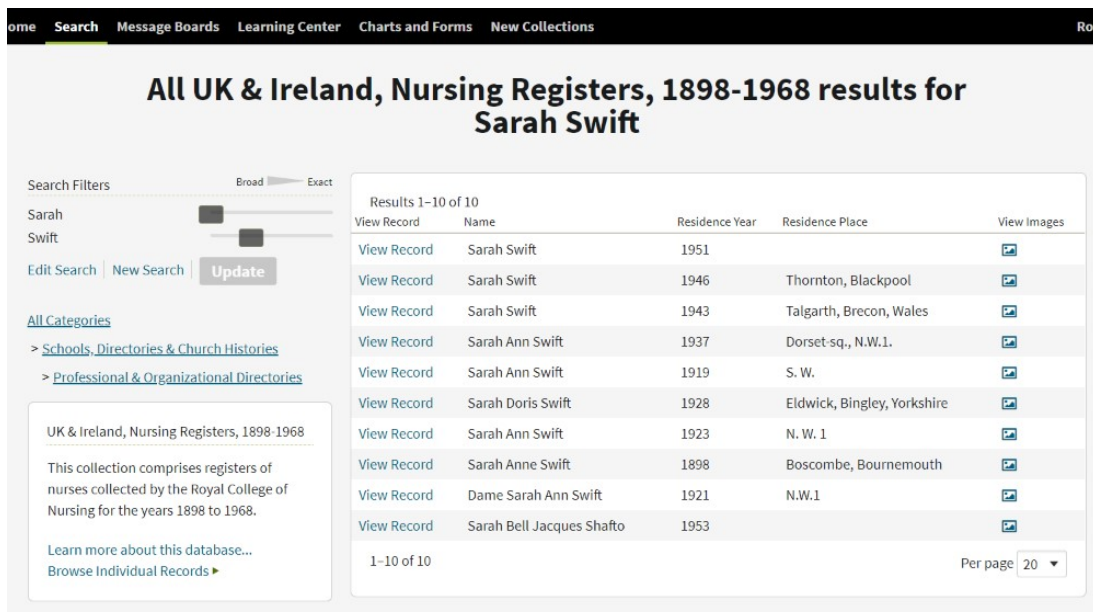|		UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1898-1968 for Sarah Ann Swift		
		Register of Nurses › 1916-1919		
9290	1918	Swanson, Margaret Sutherland	Swanson's Buildings, Castletown, Thurso, Scotland	Manchester Union, Crumpsall Infirmary	1917
7971	1918	Swanton, Nellie Josephine	Ards House, Glandore, Co. Cork, Ireland	Barrington's Hospital, Limerick	1917
10535	1918	Swanwick, Daisy Wilhelmine	General Hospital, Nottingham	General Hospital, Nottingham	1918
1006	1916	Swarbrick, Lily Rigby	Union Infirmary, Gawber Road, Barnsley, Yorks	Birmingham Union, Dudley Road Infirmary	1903
7972	1918	Sweeney, Agnes Rose	c/o Mrs. Anscombe, Iveleon, High Street, Aldershot, Hants, England	Belfast Union Infirmary, Belfast	1907
12868	1919	Sweet, Lillie May	Curyen Road, Aylesbone Park, Leicester	Derbyshire Royal Infirmary, Derby	1915
604	1916	Sweet-Escott, Florence Emily	St. Thomas's Hospital, S.E.	St. Thomas's Hospital, London	1915
6785	1918	Sweeting, Harriet Ella	75, Cowbridge Road, Cardiff, South Wales	Royal Infirmary, Gloucester	1910
9930	1918	Swift (née Walsh), Anna Maria	Cloneygath, Monasterevan, Co. Kildare, Ireland	Poor Law Infirmary, Leicester	1910
11034	1918	Swift, Lilian Caroline	9, Percy Street, Liverpool	Royal Infirmary, Liverpool	1909
1	1916	Swift (Dame), Sarah Ann	48, Primrose Mansions, S.W.	Royal Infirmary, Dundee	1880
11858	1919	Swift, Susan Dorothy	Middlesex War Hospital, Clacton-on-Sea	Middlesex Hospital, London	1918

The State Register was published by the General Nursing Council between 1922 – 1968. After that it became a database, now held by the Nursing and Midwifery Council. Being on the register became mandatory from 1943.

THE

REGISTER OF NURSES

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

THE GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

IN PURSUANCE OF

THE NURSES REGISTRATION ACT, 1919

CONTAINING

THE NAMES, QUALIFICATIONS,
AND ADDRESSES OF NURSES

REGISTERED

UNDER THE NURSES REGISTRATION ACT, 1919

1922

Price 10s. 6d.

LONDON :
PUBLISHED BY
THE GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND AND WALES
12 YORK GATE, REGENT'S PARK, N.W.1
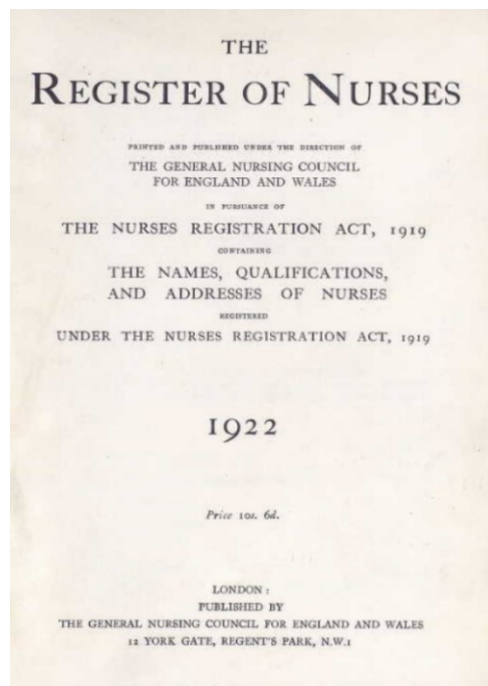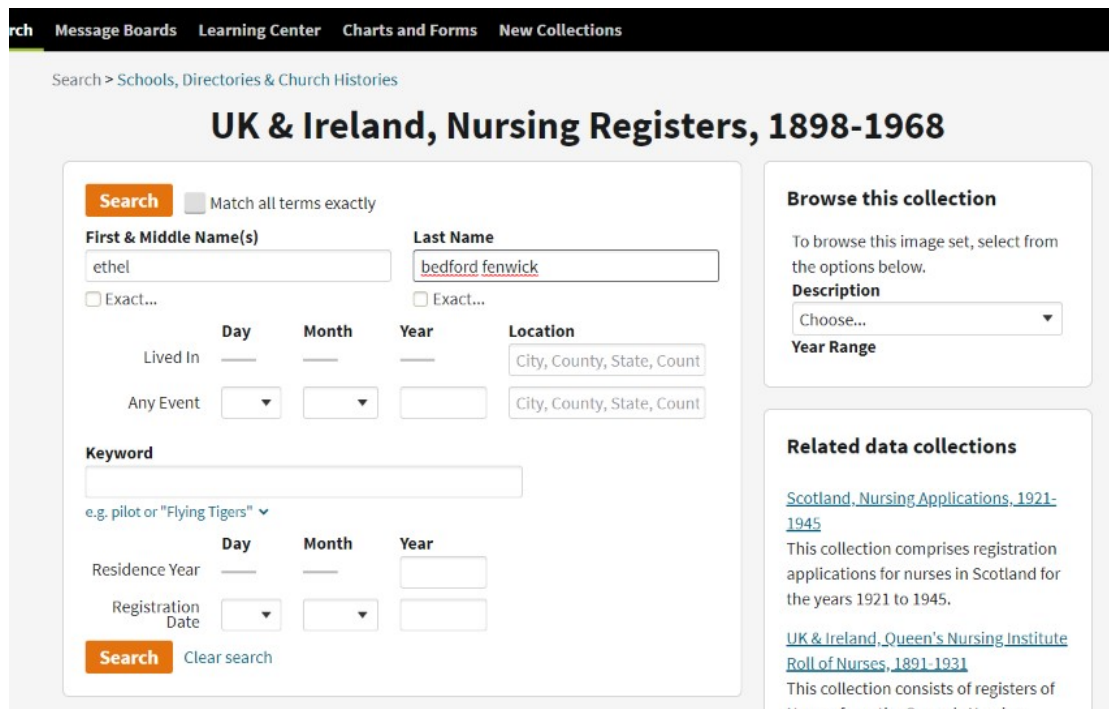
Women are often known by different names. The GNC Registers included both maiden names and married names where applicable, and Ancestry have indexed these.

This makes the Registers a particularly useful resource for researching women.

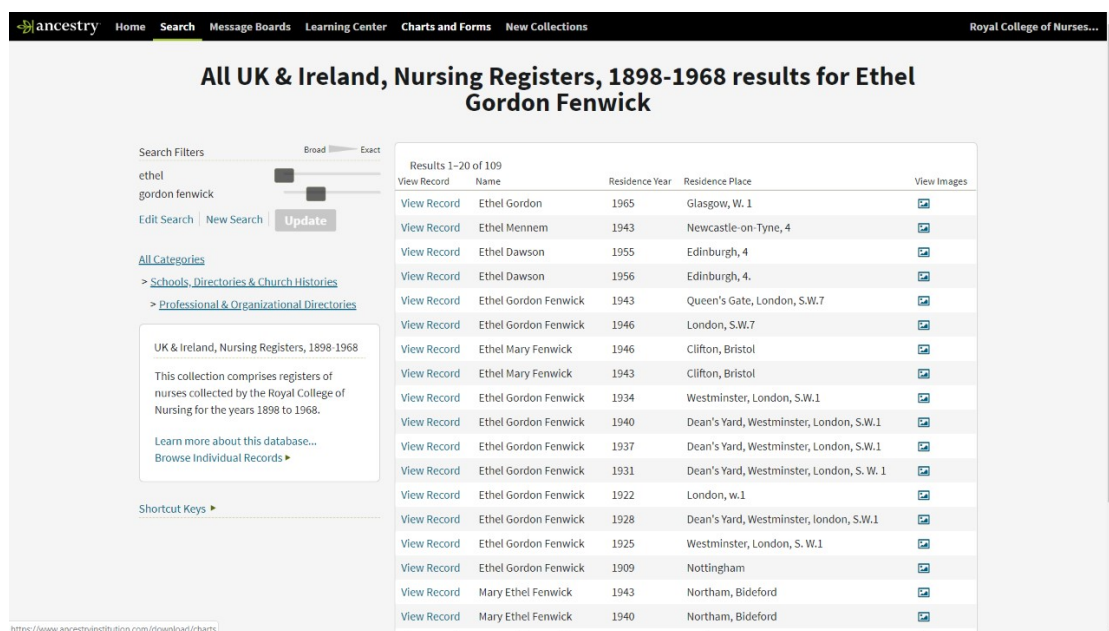Search first name = Ethel and Last Name = Gordon Fenwick.

The person we are looking, Ethel, for was active c.1922

Ethel Gordon Fenwick is No 1 on the GNC registers in honour of her work leading the campaign for State Registration of Nurses.

The register gave her address, the date of her registration, and details of where she trained. It gives both her married and her maiden (née) names. It's worth noting that Ethel Gordon Fenwick was also known as Ethel Beford Fenwick, a variation that does not appear in the Register.

Reg. No.	Name	Address	Date/Place	Training
3947	Fennessy, Rosetta Mary (née Watson)	c/o Mrs. E. Watson, 18, Clapton Passage, Clapton, London, E.5	May 19, 1922, London	born Union Infy.
1	Fenwick, Ethel Gordon (née Manson)	20, Upper Wimpole Street, London, W.1	Sept. 30, 1921, London	Tr. 1878–1879, Royal Infy., Manchester.
2050	Ferens, Margaret Sharpe	1239, Pearl Street, Alameda, California	Feb. 3, 1922, London	Cert. 1895–1900, Glasgow Royal Infy.
		Spring Hill, Cumber-	May 19, 1922,	Cert. 1905–1908, Infy.

This result is for Denzil Nurse, a man from Barbados who became a mental health nurse. Men appear throughout the registers; the mental health nursing registers tend to have higher numbers of men appearing.

UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1898-1968 for Denzil Bernard Nathaniel Nurse
Register of Nurses > 1967-1968
Save

MENTAL   **MAR–NUT**

Reg. No.	Name.	Date of Registration.	Training School or Qualifications.
41867	Martin, Tinette (née Brown)	11.12.67	Highcroft Hospital, Birmingham and Glenside Hospital, Bristol.
41629	Nichols, Wendy Josephine	30.11.67	Bethlem Royal Hospital, Beckenham and Maudsley Hospital, London.
41313	Noddle, Florence Jane	8.9.67	Claybury Hospital, Woodford Green.
41561	Nolan, Yvonne	29.11.67	St. Luke's Woodside Hospital, London and Hill End Hospital, St. Albans.
41839	Nurse, Denzil Bernard Nathaniel	6.12.67	Stanley Royd Hospital, Wakefield.
41504	Nutsugah, Godfried Koblah	28.11.67	Stanley Royd Hospital, Wakefield.

III

How to search the registers for place names

For local history searches, you can search by place name. Ancestry has not indexed the registers by 'location', but place names do appear if you search for them as keywords.

Search the registers, for ''Keyword = Location = Macclesfield'.

There are 853 results for Macclesfield, which gives huge potential for local history research.

The register's entry for Lilian Drewitt, below, shows her as 'living-in' at the hospital.

Student nurses were not the only ones to live onsite. At the beginning of the twentieth century many nurses and matrons still lived onsite in hospital property for their entire working lives. This slowly changed and was less likely in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Some nursing positions continue to require staff to live onsite for part, if not all, of their time – such as some defence nursing roles.

UK & Ireland, Nursing Registers, 1898-1968 for Lilian Drewitt

Register of Nurses > 1928

GENERAL PART

Reg. No.	Name.	Permanent Address.	Date and Place of Registration.
29378	Drewitt, Lilian	General Infirmary, Maccles-field	Mar. 21, 1924, London
14160	Dreyer, Rosalie	Lynton Croft, Park Hill Road, Croydon, Surrey	April 20, 1923, London
10446	Drieselman, Muriel Dorothy Elizabeth	78, Claremont Road, High-gate, London, N.6	June 15, 1923, London
21537	Driffill, Norah	Cliffe, Selby, Yorkshire	Sept. 21, 1923, London
40456	Drillingcourt, Eliza	36, Newman Street, Kirk-	Nov. 20, 1925,

A search by place name can highlight links with registered overseas nurses.

The search given below for Keyword = Lagos has 176 results.

The extracts show the early years 1925-1940s, dominated by 'English names'. This possibly reflects the number of white 'expat' nurses going from the UK to the then British colony of Nigeria. Though it could be identifying Nigerian nurses with anglicised names.

The later period of the 1960s lists more African names. This probably reflects black women who came to the UK to train and register but then returned to build what was now an independent Nigeria.

For some nurses, staying on the UK registers was a matter of status, and career progression at 'home'. It was also a way to keep the door to the UK open – either for work or to return for additional training courses and to progress further up the career ladder.
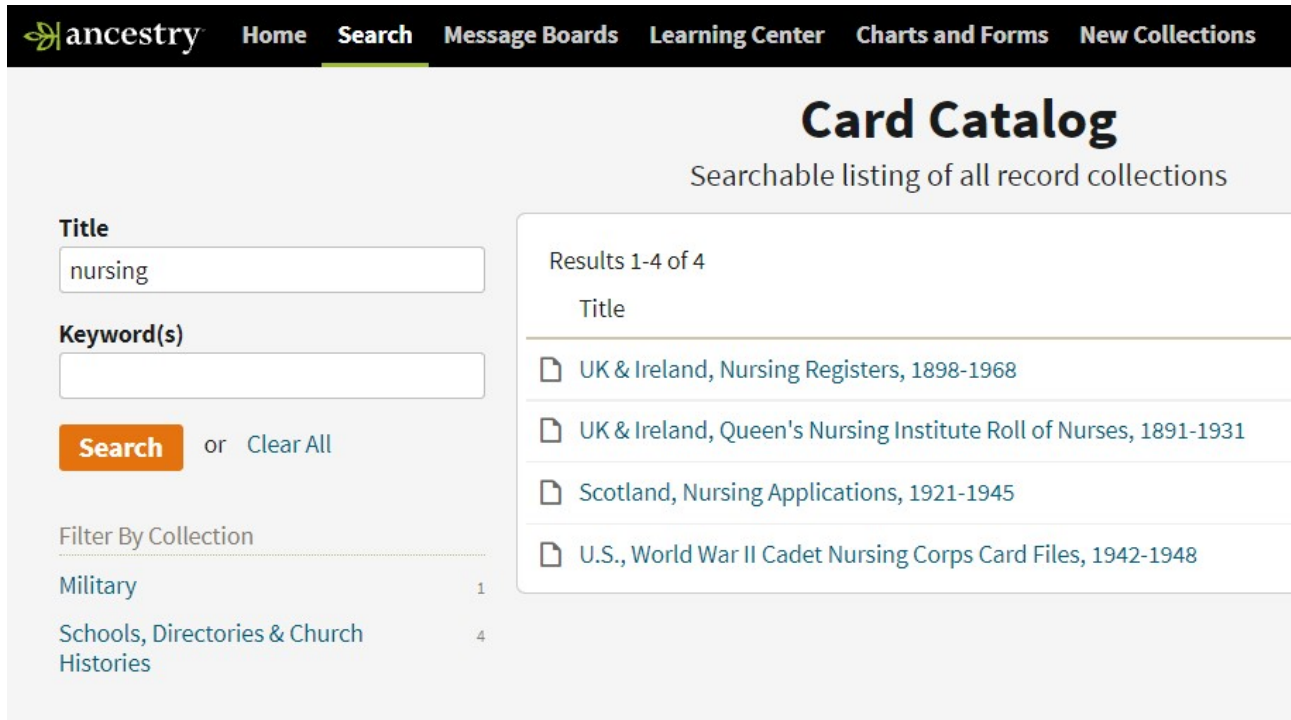
For family historians this means it is worth searching for nurses trained in Britain who returned 'home'. Not everyone was on the register; nurses did not have to be on the UK register, but it may be worth a quick search.

View Record	Mary Ann Langdon Gummow	1934	Post Master, Lagos, Nigeria, West Africa	🖼
View Record	Rita Mary Dann	1934	Lagos, Nigeria, West Africa	🖼
View Record	Isabel Morrison Anderson	1925	Lagos, Nigeria, West Africa	🖼

View Record	Olusola Uddoh	1968	Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria	🖼
View Record	Olusola Uddoh	1966	Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria	🖼
View Record	Elizabeth Olubunmi Ibilola Modupe Subair	1968	Ebutemetta, Lagos, Nigeria	🖼
View Record	Elizabeth Olubunmi Ibilola Modupe Subair	1966	Ebutemetta, Lagos, Nigeria	🖼
View Record	Ayodele Adesola Sowande	1966	Lagos, Nigeria	🖼

How to browse the registers by year

Repeat the steps that take you to the list of nursing registers. Choose the nursing register you wish to browse.

On the right-hand side there is a drop-down menu which gives a further breakdown of the types of registers available within the collection.

Using the Register of Nurses as an example, if you choose that collection underneath an option to choose and browse by year will appear.

Please note, that for some years Ancestry digitised the College of Nursing Register *and* the General Nursing Register back-to back. For example, if you select 1922 it contains two different registers. Check the end of the volume to see if it is a different register to the one at the front!

Select the year you want to browse, such as 1950. It will take you to the first page, use the arrows at either side of the image, or the page number at the bottom to move through the register. As it is in alphabetical order by surname it is relatively easy to browse.

Check the contents page which usually appears in pages 1-6. This will outline what the sections are. Occasionally an appendix of General Registered Nurses appears at the end of the volume. Each section is in alphabetical order.

Although male nurses were usually listed separately for general nurses you will find men in the other sections, such as mental nurses. The sections (male, mental, children, fever) are mostly found as sub sections of the GNC register rather than as separate volumes.
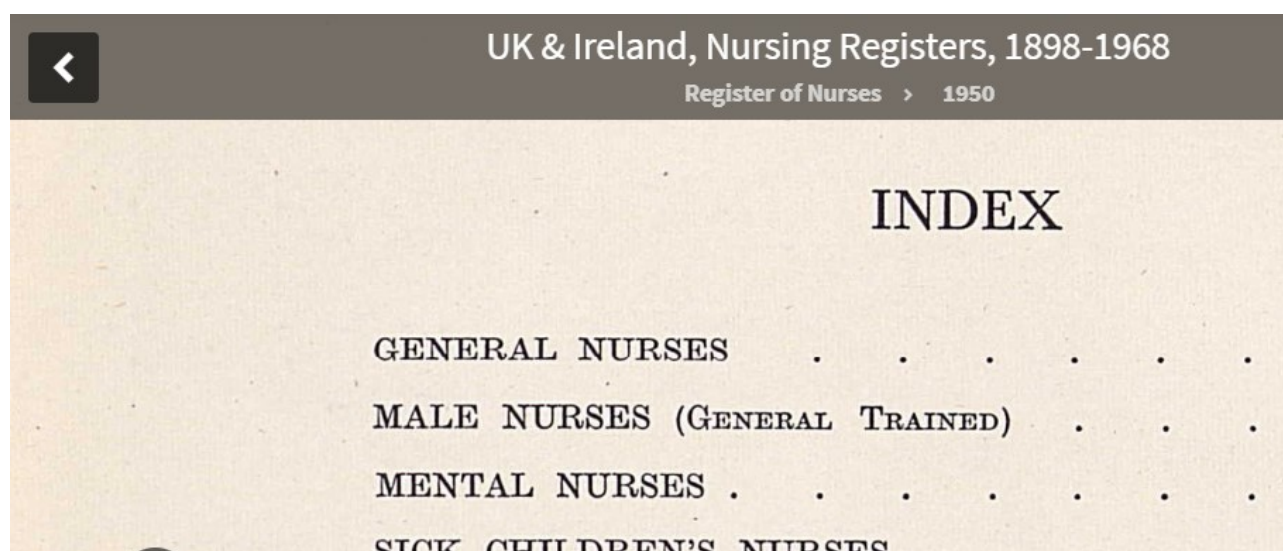
Common abbreviations used in the registers

Cert = Certificated

Conj Cert = Conjointly Certificated

EN = Existing Nurse

Exp = Evidence of experience in line with the Rules. Only in the supplementary registers for Mental and Fever nurses.

FNA = Fever Nurses Association

MAB Metropolitan Asylums Board

MPA and RMPA = royal Medico-Psychological Association

NT = Nurse in training before issue of Rules

AE = After Examination (Nurse who has passed the Council's Examination)

RFN = Registered Fever Nurse

RMN = Registered Mental [Health] Nurse

RNMD = Registered Nurse for Mental Defectives (sic) [now referred to as Learning Disability Nurses]

RST = Registered Sister Tutor (holder of Certificate of Registration as a Sister Tutor)

SB of H Scottish Board of Health

SRN = State registered nurses (on the General part of the register), this included men who were state registered nurses

Tr = Trained

Reasons why you don't find your nurse on Ancestry

The most common reason is that the name on the register differs from the name you are looking for:

- Your nurse could have used a different name, such as a second name or a nickname (i.e. 'May' instead of 'Martha' or 'Nan' instead of 'Ann')
- The name was entered or indexed incorrectly on the register
- Double-barrelled names and married names often cause confusion
- Names are 'anglicised' with the spelling, or even the entire name, changed
  - The nurse could have been an SEN (State Enrolled Nurse) or a QNI nurse (Queens Nursing Institute – which is district or community nursing) or a midwife
  - Your nurse registered after 1968
  - Your nurse lived before registration was introduced in 1922,
  - Your nurse was not a member of the College of Nursing (registers for 1916-1923),
  - Your nurse was a male, mental, mental defective, children, or fever nurse pre 1922 – these nurses were not included in College of Nursing membership until the 1960s

- Your nurse appears in the register but is not indexed. Due to the size of the dataset Ancestry have not yet indexed every single year of the register. If you have an exact year when your ancestor was actively nursing, you can still look them up on the register. See the section in Appendix One on 'How to Browse the Registers by Year'
    - There is often a time lag in people appearing on the register. If you know the year of registration, but cannot find your nurse, browse the register *and* the supplementary registers for that year. If your nurse is not listed, browse the register (and supplements) for the following year.
- During the occupation in Jersey nurses had an enforced separation from the GNC and although they continued training, they were only allowed to join again in 1946
- While the 1943 Act made it compulsory for practising nurses to register, it was not rigorously enforced; many nurses simply did not register
- Implementation of registration for SENs appear to have been only lightly implemented. Nurses employed for casual work or short contracts were unlikely to be caught if they did nor register. Nurses on casual contracts would have been low paid and loath to pay the registration fee
- There was no difference in fees regardless of whether you were a fully registered nurse or a state enrolled nurse
- If the nurse only worked in wartime, then they would more likely be registered with organisations like the British Red Cross, Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS), The Territorial Force Nursing Service or Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service (QARNNS)
- Your nurse was a student nurse who subsequently did not register. Occasionally successful student nurses left nursing due to life events – such as getting married.
- Your nurse migrated. Nurses only joined the register when they had qualified and were working. Many nurses successfully trained in the UK but then moved overseas. Some nurses came to the UK specifically to train as a nurse before returning 'home'. This was particularly true for Britain's (former) colonies. Some nurses paid to stay on the register to enhance their status and their ability to find work. But many would not have applied to be on the register
- Your nurse was on a nursing register for another country. In the early and mid-twentieth century, Britain had reciprocal arrangements with a few of its colonies, recognising state registers of nursing which were agreed to be at a similar standard. These arrangements are sometimes listed at the front of the register. New Zealand was the first country in the world to maintain a state register of nurses, first collated in 1902.