On May 12th Salisbury Hospital commemorates the anniversary of Florence Nightingale’s birthday with Nurses Day.

Florence is an instantly recognisable icon of the Victorian age and much is known about the legend, ‘The Lady With the Lamp’ who became a national heroine at Crimea.

Florence Nightingale achieved a position of prominence which enabled her to campaign for the training of nurses, public health and came to symbolise modern nursing.

Florence had close links with Salisbury throughout her career:

- **1845**: Florence Nightingale first expressed her wish to be a nurse, and hoped to get permission from her family to enter Salisbury Infirmary, the closest hospital to their family home of Embley House near Wellow. Her family were opposed to the idea as nurses, at that time, tended to come from much poorer backgrounds.

- **1854-1856**: Friend Sidney Herbert, President of Salisbury Infirmary, younger son of 11th Earl of Pembroke and Minister for War, involved Florence in nursing at the Crimean War where the British army were losing more men to infection in the Scutari Hospital than to their actual injuries. Today a statue of Sidney Herbert stands in Victoria Park, Salisbury.

- **1896**: We still have letters of advice dating from 1896 from Florence Nightingale to her cousin Edith Joanna Bonham Carter (left) who was at that time Lady Superintendent of Salisbury’s Nurses Home. Florence writes about her concerns for the expected number of new probation nurses and the amount of accommodation available to them.
The images on the left show a range of areas at Salisbury Infirmary around the turn of the 20th Century. The then Matron Mary McMasters poses for a photograph with her nursing team around her (top left).

Middle and below left: The Infirmary chapel stands in stark contrast to the Sister’s sitting room which is highly decorated in a domestic Victorian style.

Top right show the operating theatre and note the bare floorboards, gas lamps and electric lights (which were installed around 1902).

Middle right shows dispensing from the drug trolley on a female ward of the Infirmary

Bottom right shows the furnishings and interior of what was probably a nurse lounge area.
Left: Model collection box inscribed ‘Patients Xmas Fund’ depicting a nurse wearing a 1930s style uniform. This collecting box used to stand in the entrance of Salisbury Infirmary.

Middle: Small dolls, in the Salisbury Medical Society collection, were sold in aid of the Infirmary bed fund. Each made with unique uniforms of cloth.

Below: ‘Scenes from the Carnival, June 18th - July 5th 1930’ a postcard showing a giant who was created for the carnival by Salisbury Steam Laundry. Mounted on a trailer, Auntie Smiler has a papier-mache head and dressed as a nurse; she is towed by a car converted to her pram. Maybe she is the great, great… granddaughter of the Salisbury giant that currently resides at Salisbury & South Wiltshire Museum?
After WW2 and at the formation of the National Health Service there was a shortage of available nurses.

With an urgent need for a nearby location for their training, the newly formed, Salisbury District Hospital Management Committee leased New Hall in Bodenham in 1947. Here the Preliminary Training School for the group was soon opened.

Later in 1953 Harcourt House, close to Salisbury Infirmary in Crane Bridge Road, was bought and converted into a Training School, continuing until the closure in 1992.
Photographs from June 1967 article in Hospital World magazine.

Here Jeanne Yates, Theatre Superintendent at Odstock Hospital (now Salisbury District Hospital) demonstrates the features of the new theatre suite.

This four theatre unit was opened in April 1966, as an state-of-the-art model which was thought to lead the way in design for future district hospitals. This improved theatre suite aimed to reduce this risk of contamination through various new innovations.

First in the country, was in the circulation of air through the suite; Others included a ‘no hands’ intercom system and the use of Bowie-type trays delivered to lay-up rooms through wall hatches fitted with sliding shelves.

The whole unit with fixtures, fittings and equipment, cost £120,000. Surgery performed in the unit was gynaecology, orthopaedic, children’s general, oral facial, maxillary and plastic and reconstructive. About 4,500 cases were performed in 1966.
During a hospital stay, illustrator Chris D Watkiss painted and sketched daily ward life.

Entitled ‘Queensbury Ward, Salisbury Infirmary Oct 1982’ the watercolour on paper drawing is surrounded on the mount by many smaller studies (seen below) of nurses and patients on the ward. These images surely reflect the kindness and care he received from staff on the ward. Each one you can imagine a small scene being played out.

Chris wrote on the drawing ‘From sketches made whilst a patient & receiving excellent attention’

Another watercolour painting in the hospital collection, by Chris, is the view from Queensbury Ward window across the rooftops from Salisbury Infirmary.