

# Florence Nightingale

Photo credit : UK Association for the History of Nursing



Plaque number 62, to **Florence Nightingale**, installed in 2010 at 12 York Place.

Nightingale was a visitor to Harrogate, for the first time in 1852, staying with her aunt at Mrs Wright's lodgings. Her renown, of course, was international. Born in 1820 in Florence, hence her name, into a prosperous family, she trained as a nurse in Europe and in 1853, the year following that Harrogate visit, became the superintendent of a hospital for invalid women in London. But her fame comes from volunteering for duty in the Crimean War in 1854 when she took thirty-eight nurses to the military hospital at Scutari, where she reduced the mortality rate drastically. It is from this service that the name of the Lady with the Lamp derives.

Back in England, she formed institutions for the training of nurses and in succeeding years devoted herself to the improvement of nursing and public health. She was also a noted statistician. Her continuing significance and the esteem in which she is widely regarded is shown by the naming of the emergency Covid-19 hospitals as Nightingales and by the declaration of 2020, the bicentenary of her birth, as International Year of the Nurse and Midwife by the World Health Organisation. But, like many figures from the past, she has more recently come under attack for racist and colonialist beliefs. The New Zealand Nurses' Association declined to participate in those birthday celebrations based on her role as advisor to the governor of New Zealand in the 1860s during a period of severe repression of Maori uprisings. I will close with a quotation from her: 'I attribute my success to this – I never gave or took any excuse'.

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Author: Paul Jennings March 2021