

before the concepts of asepsis and anaesthesia became widely accepted there was a marked increase in active treatment and in the 1840s the Governors were questioning the huge increase in the application of leeches, to the temples for headaches, the stomach for coughs and behind the ears for fevers and convulsions. In one year the cost of leeches actually came to more than the cost of the nurses' and servants' wages. Those four nurses were kept extremely busy merely attending to their 'bites'.

It was in 1864 that the physicians and surgeons made a very strong appeal for more nurses to be employed and trained in the skills required of them. Unfortunately the state of the Infirmary's finances was such that they could afford to do neither. Instead, the hospital tried to achieve their aim by using members of a Home established locally as a High Church religious sisterhood who offered to provide pupil nurses at no cost to the Infirmary. The strongly Protestant faction amongst the subscribers reacted furiously to this threat to the patients in their hospital. A very acrimonious meeting lasting four hours was held in the City Tolsey or Guildhall, the only place big enough to hold all who wished to attend. Every word of that four hours is recorded in the two full closely printed pages in the Gloucester Journal, so important was this issue to the City. The Protestants won the day and, in spite of further appeals, a training school was not fully established in Gloucester for another ten years, following a special effort to put the finances on a stronger footing.

In the next twenty years the hospital and its doctors and nurses progressed towards the twentieth century. However, in 1900 the Governors saw fit to confirm the following bye laws and have them specially printed and distributed:

Infirmary Bye Laws 1900

Duties of the House Surgeon, Assistant House Surgeon and Dispenser as they affect the Nurses ...

1. They shall regularly and punctually change the dressings of patients who have been operated upon unless the Surgeon in charge of the case shall have directed otherwise or authorised this duty being delegated to the Nurse.
2. Sub-cutaneous injections of drugs shall be given only by the House or Assistant House Surgeon and shall not be delegated to a Nurse.

In the light of the worries of nurses today, it would be interesting to discover when surgical wound dressings and sub-cutaneous injections came to be recognised as part of the role of the nurse. However, since the byelaws disappeared without comment at the next printing, we may assume the Gloucester nurses quietly extended their role without further debate.

There were several other developments of the nurse's role and the Gloucester records clearly show that the para-medical professions began as extended nursing roles. In 1837 the physicians had complained because the matron had "caused a very material deviation in the diet ordered for a patient" and the matron was cautioned not to interfere with the diets of