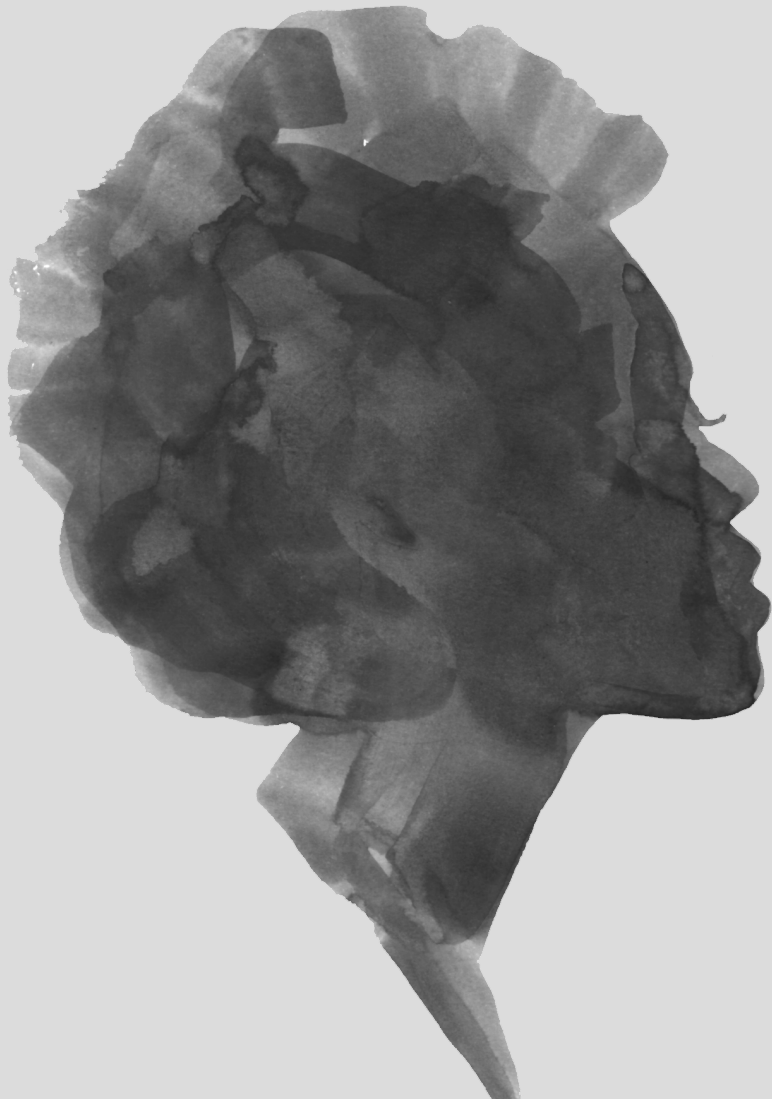




# Moments of Grace

An oral history of nursing  
around the clock

Moments of Grace is an oral history artwork  
co-created by GSTT nurses and midwives.



Ingredients:

Recordings with nurses and midwives, original  
music, and light.

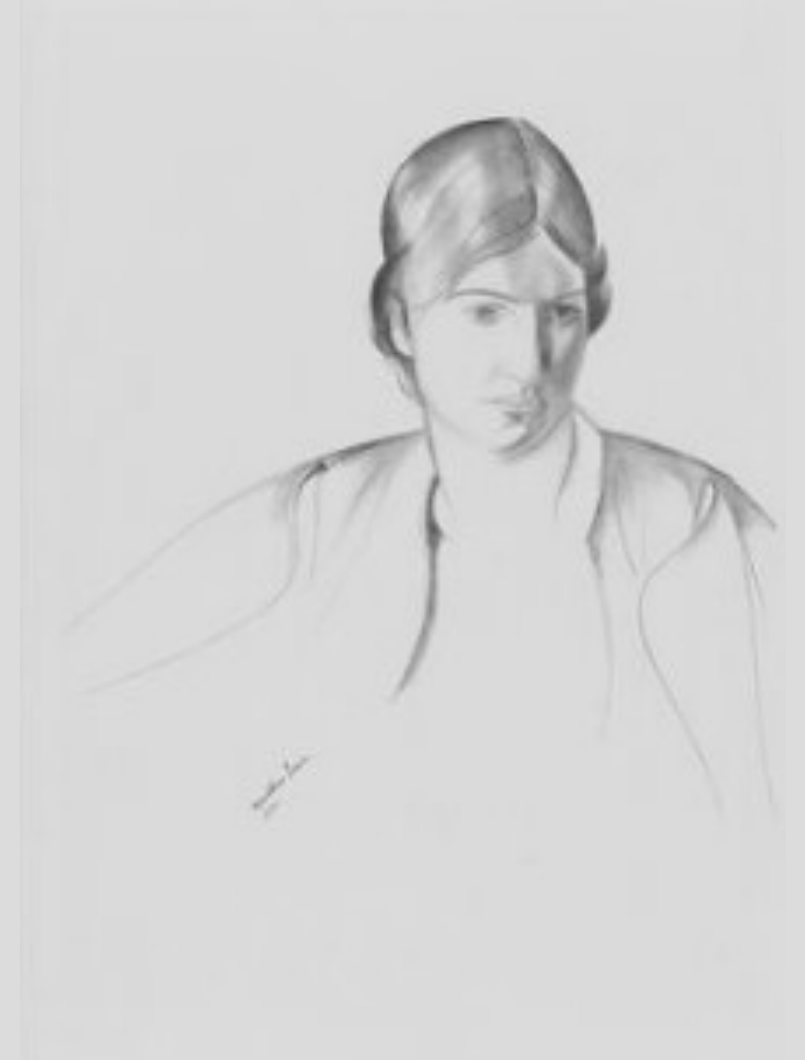
With thanks to:

Marie-France Kittler (curator)  
Guy's and St Thomas' Foundation  
Historic England (supporting the physical  
realisation in Central Hall)

Four generations of my family have been connected to St Thomas' Hospital. Naomi Mitchison's diary from the period:

*"I had brought the most interesting of the guinea pigs with me, and, by special arrangement, kept them on the terrace along the river. They were, I think, an F2 generation and it was essential for our work on genetics to see how they turned out."*

*"One of the serviceman with a leg wound had been a professional pick-pocket.....One couldn't have advised him to take up any other profession. If by any chance he ever reads this, I would love to know how he gets on."*



My great grandmother, Naomi Mitchison, WW1 nurse



Piece for [the Royal Parks](#) To be included in BBC shortcuts 2023.



2019. A youth-led oral history of the racist 'sus laws' and community action around it.



2018. A sound piece, with Gareth Fry, for Somerset House show *By the Deep, By the Mark*, commissioned and led by Eloise Hawser.

Healthcare commissions include a documentary film with The Cassel Hospital (tier 4 psychiatric unit) and permanent public artworks for UCLH, *The Texture of Air*.



*The Texture of Air*: Detail from 4m sculpture made of glass, light, wood, LiDAR. Commemorates former dental and ENT hospitals on Grays Inn Road, closed in 2019.

Still from audio-visual work featuring  
the voices of NHS staff and patients  
from the lost hospitals on the Grays  
Inn Road. Exhibited at International  
Short film festivals

<https://www.thetextureofair.uk>



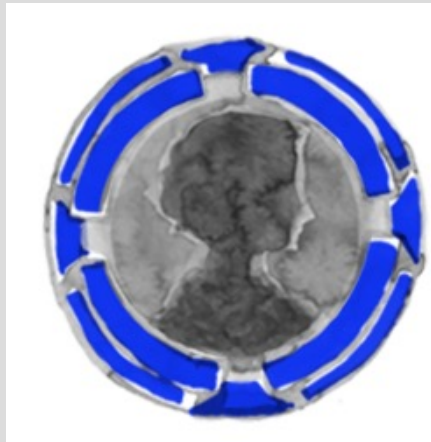
2020: Began recording oral histories in The International Year of the Nurse & Midwife. We sent an invitation to everyone trained at the Nightingale Training school, and the next generation Nightingales.

Active invitation to nurses from groups who were historically underrepresented at St Thomas’.

The visual ID nods to the Nightingale badge and to countless nurses whose lives have not been illuminated in museums, including Kofoworola Abeni Pratt and Princess Ademola.



Kofoworola Abeni Pratt  
Fellowship



New Nightingale award



The good nurse, writes **Florence Nightingale (1859)**,  
*“must make no demand on the patient for  
acknowledgement or even perception of her  
services, since the best service a nurse can give is  
that the patient shall scarcely be aware of any.”*

**Morisha Moodley, recorded for Moments of  
Grace (2021):** *“I think the presumed invisibility of  
nurses links to gender in that a lot of nurses are  
women. And historically have always been women.  
And women are expected to take the role of care  
giver, without ever saying anything about it, or  
acknowledging that they’ve taken that role. And  
then they’re also made to not comment on maybe  
their difficulties, or even their achievements, as  
being a care giver.”*

Moments of Grace highlights the value &  
complexity of nurses’ and midwives’ time, in the  
relatable form of narrative.





# Moments of Grace The Oral Archive

To date: 45 diverse nurses and midwives, aged 22-87, whose lives have intersected with world historical events, and deeply personal ones. 5000 minutes of recording.

*“When you’re musically improvising and you have this connection that you can’t put into words but that’s a response to and with somebody else, what you’re creating is something that is more beautiful, more challenging, more expansive than either of you could on your own. The same moment can happen in nursing. I would describe it as a moment of grace.” Ian Noonan, mental health nurse*



# Moments of Grace The Music Archive

3 musical suites: Big Ben, Thames, Circadian Time.

More music in the making specifically for Central Hall – inspired by the stories and soundscapes.



GSTT Field recordi... >>

Name	Search	Date Modified
>  Central Hall	⊕	Today at 23:05
>  Dentistry	⊕	11 May 2022 at 20:07
>  Endoscopy	⊕	11 May 2022 at 20:07
>  River terrace St Thomas'	⊕	Today at 23:05
>  SAIL Unit	⊕	11 May 2022 at 20:07

Back/Forward View Group Share Add Tags Action

2am_short.wav	8am_long.wav	8am_longer.wav	Big Ben_Theme.wav	Big Ben_var...ion1.wav	Big Ben_var...ion2.wav	cello_bongs.wav
cello_breath.wav	cello_breathing.wav	cello_breathing2.wav	cello_flutter_breathing.wav	delayed_strings_ketch.wav	delayed_theme_ketch.wav	River_atmos.wav
Slow Ben.wav	String_theme_main.wav	string_theme_slow.wav	string_theme_stripped.wav	String_theme_variation.wav	tempo_speed.wav	Test_bong_drone.wav
Time_Beats1.wav	Time_Beats3.wav	1pm_short_tempo_change.wav				

# Nursing and Time

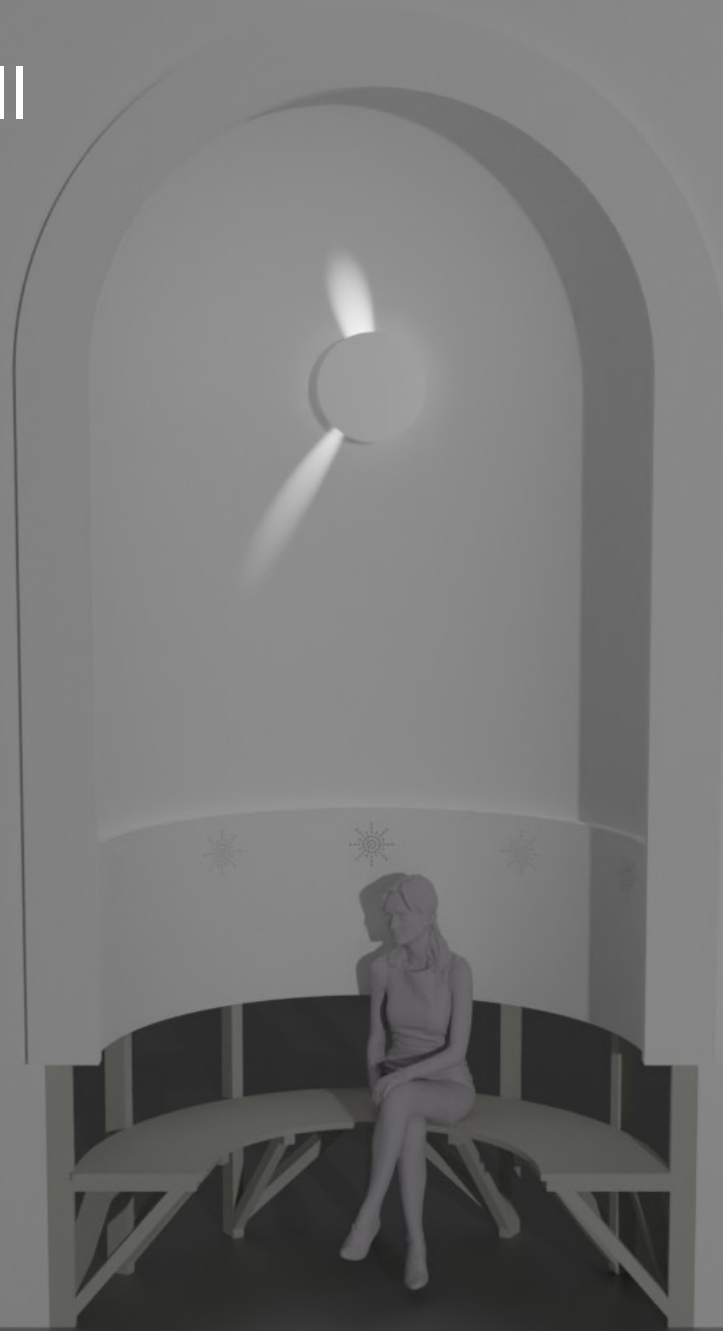


# Bench Alcove: Central Hall

We'll make 100 bite sized sound and light compositions, indexed to different times of day. One composition for every fifteen minutes of the day.

So, if you enter at 2am you might hear of sightings of the gray lady, at 4.27 you might hear about an emergency delivery, at 3pm you might hear of nurses hitching a ride with the river police...

We can program particular stories to appear at Eid, Saga Dawa, Christmas, Groundation Day and so on.



Installation ingredients:

1. Original music
2. Light
3. Nurses voices

The compositions will show nurses in so many different guises - as artists, friends, daughters, scientists, advocates, carers, policy makers, healers, listeners, diagnosers, researchers, and crisis managers.

**MAYOR OF LONDON****Laura Mitchison**

Co-Director  
On the Record  
[laura@on-the-record.org.uk](mailto:laura@on-the-record.org.uk)

**Date:** 6 May 2022

Dear Laura,

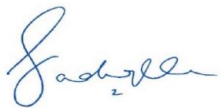
I wanted to write to thank you for all of the work that you have done to capture and amplify the experiences of nurses and midwives who were on the frontline, caring for Londoners during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moments of Grace is a beautifully curated website full of powerful stories that highlight the vital role of our nurses, midwives and other carers. It will play an important role in ensuring that we do not forget the sacrifices that they made to keep us well, and to care for our loved ones who fell ill or sadly passed away due to COVID-19. I am pleased that we were able to support the creation of this website through the London Community Story project and I look forward to seeing future projects that emerge from On the Record. I am also grateful that you were able to share some of your journey so far at our recent conference 'Looking Back, Moving Forwards' and I have received excellent feedback from my Deputy Mayor for Communities and Social Justice and my Community Engagement team.

As Mayor, I'm committed to ensuring that all of London's key workers, including nurses and midwives, are paid a fair wage for the essential work that they do. I will continue to stand up for London's key workers to ensure that they can live and work in our city.

On behalf of all Londoners, thank you for capturing and preserving these powerful stories.

Yours sincerely,



**Sadiq Khan**  
Mayor of London



<http://momentsofgrace.uk>

Our 'Proof of concept' website won the London  
Community Story Award

The installation is silent until someone sits down (motion sensor).

Once seated the visitor experiences the intimacy of voices next to their ears. Some compositions are solo voiced, others feature several voices in conversation.

5 small speakers (5:1 surround sound) so we can spatialize different voices and instruments across the alcove to create an immersive experience.



The light dial can tell the objective time and express subjective dimensions of time.

The rays of light in the light dial can change direction, focus, speed to express the way time is experienced subjectively by the nurse storytellers and their patients. Time freezes, warps, and even disappears at the end of life.

Light is integral – a tonal, rhythmic element.



## QUESTIONS FOR THE COMMITTEE

1. Occasional washes of coloured light from the lip of the alcove?
2. Interactive buttons?  
Back – plays compositions indexed to the more distant past.  
Forward – plays night-time compositions, or even The Future?
3. Can we install the bench alcove in the quietest part of Central Hall?



4. 2023 Audio production workshops, open to staff, geared towards creating compositions for the artwork will be run in early 2023. Your thoughts?

Nurses and young people can curate stories from the oral histories – living memories.

The stories of future nurses can also be captured in the form of radio diaries or of more creative pieces. For example:

A KCL nursing student shared a prophetic dream with me. It's 2040 and the world is flooded under 7 miles of water, but St Thomas' Hospital miraculously floats on top...What powers do future nurses have, she wonders?

Other are interested in making audio pieces about the lives of historic nurses. See overleaf.



“It’s hard to find detailed information about Princess Adenrele Ademola. A few photos, the basic facts of birth (1916), royal parents in Southern Nigeria, migration to the UK, midwife and nurse training at Guy’s Hospital, qualifying in 1941. There are records of her working in London hospitals during WW2 and the name her patients adopted for her – ‘Fairy’. The colonial office made a film about her that circulated widely in West Africa as part of their efforts to recruit from the colonies as part of the war effort. The film, very sadly, has been lost.

So who was she? What made her tick? What were her experiences of nursing and living in this country?

She looks straight at the camera, a half smile revealing perfect, even teeth. Her wide face is framed by hanging earrings, a stylish high topped hat and a statement rope necklace. She leans a little to one side, her forearms resting on the top of the opened train window – if you are old enough you will remember those ones? - the top half of the compartment door, the window you pulled down with great effort and a crash and leaned out of to kiss your loved one goodbye? Or in romantic films where lovers held hands, one on board the train, the other walking along the platform until the speed of the train parted them. Steam trains that bore witness to immigration arrivals at Plymouth or Southampton docks, or fond farewells at city and village stations.” Liesbeth de Block



# Comments from Participating Nurses and Midwives

*“I was just saying about the importance of recording history as you're going through it, rather as a reflection....And I think it's always important to capture things as you're experiencing.” Sittana Abdelmagid*

*“I learned things about my mum’s nursing history and early life in Barbados that I’d never heard before the recording made it a bit of an event.” Jill Eastmond*

*“Had a great day being interviewed by the fabulous*

*@Ontherecordcic*

*Had soooo much fun discussing #KofoworolaAbeniPratt  
#nursing #midwifery #courageousleadership #life  
#career and the numerous privileges nursing and  
midwifery has given me.*

*#leadingwithlove “ Ruth Oshikanlu*

The nurse and midwife contributors were informed by the Trust that their stories would live in Central hall as their primary purpose. The Moments of Grace archive will be deposited at London Metropolitan Archives, as a secondary purpose.

Thank you for reading.

Laura Mitchison, one half of On the Record.  
Portfolio: [www.on-the-record.org.uk](http://www.on-the-record.org.uk).

