

Anne Campbell Gibson, Matron of the Beaufort War Hospital 1915/16

Anne (also known as Annie) Campbell Gibson S.R.N., was the daughter of John Gibson, born 1813, who later became a teacher at Madras College, St Andrew's in Scotland. On 10 August 1840 he was appointed the first of H.M. Inspectors of Schools in Scotland and, from 1850 until 1856, was the headmaster and owner of Merchiston Castle Academy in Colinton Road, Edinburgh. Her mother was Anne McDougall Gibson, born c.1817 in Killin, Perthshire.

Anne Campbell Gibson was born in Edinburgh c.1850 and had six brothers, John born c.1843; Hugh c.1846; Patrick McDougall c.1849; Andrew c.1852; Alexander c.1853, and James P.R.S. c.1855. Anne's father John died in 1858 and by 1861 her mother was running a boarding house at Bruntsfield Place in Edinburgh.

In 1879 the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association was formed, and in 1881 Anne enrolled at the Nightingale Fund nurses' training school at St Thomas' Hospital in London. It was there, at the express wish of Florence Nightingale, that Anne Gibson's interest and work was directed to Poor Law nursing, as Miss Nightingale told her that wherever the need was, there must be a Nightingale Nurse to meet it. Anne soon became a favourite of Florence Nightingale, and after only a year at St Thomas' Hospital she was appointed assistant to Mary Cadbury, a member of the famous Birmingham chocolate family, who was then the Superintendent at the Brownlow Hill Workhouse Infirmary in Liverpool. It was therefore not surprising that on 20 August 1883 Florence Nightingale wrote to Mary Cadbury stating that she was glad that Miss Gibson was going on holiday at once as she was alarmed at how many of the nurses at the hospital were contracting typhus.

By 1887 Anne Gibson had taken over as Matron at the Brownlow Hill Workhouse Infirmary, and later went on to become a well known personality in the nursing world being an excellent organizer and a forceful speaker and writer on poor-law nursing. She was keenly interested in the efficient care of the sick under the Poor Law, and advocated the affiliation of small infirmaries with the larger ones as a means to this end. She was also a certified midwife, and was President of the Midwives' Institute for a number of years.

However, Anne Campbell Gibson was probably best known as the Matron for many years of the Birmingham Poor Law Union Infirmary, and it was in 1888, ahead of the official opening of the Workhouse Infirmary (now Birmingham City Hospital), that she was appointed Matron (or Lady Superintendent). Anne went on to be supported in post by a number of other Nightingale Nurses and Probationers and when the Infirmary at Western Road in Birmingham, opened in January 1889, it had a corridor a quarter of a mile long linking nine pavilions, based on a model recommended by Florence Nightingale.

On 13 February 1895 Anne Gibson read her paper "Nursing in Workhouses and Workhouse Infirmaries" at the Central Poor Law Conference held at the Guildhall, in

London, and while working at the Birmingham Workhouse Infirmary also founded the Nurse Training School, before retiring in 1912. In 1914 and early 1915 she was recorded as living alone at Culmington Road in Ealing, but in the summer of 1915 the War Office appointed Miss Annie Campbell Gibson as Matron of the new Beaufort War Hospital in Bristol, to which they supplied sisters and nurses from Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Staff Reserve as required. However, about a year after the hospital opened (c. May 1916), she handed over her position as Matron to Sister Underwood, who already worked at the hospital.

After leaving the Beaufort War Hospital, Annie Campbell Gibson went on to serve on the Council of the College of Nursing when it was formed 1 April 1917. Between 1921 and 1923 she was listed as living alone at Eton Villas, Camden, London NW3, and at Arden Road, Church End, Finchley, London N3, from 1924 to 1925. Anne Campbell Gibson died a spinster on 21 April 1926, aged 78, leaving an estate valued at £3275, while on 26 April a memorial service was held in the private Chapel at St Thomas' Hospital prior to the interment which took place privately in Edinburgh. Today there is still an Anne Gibson Committee Room at Birmingham City Hospital.



John Gibson 1847



Anne Campbell Gibson 1888