



## Memories of the Minsk Ghetto

An audience of 24 gathered in the Garden Suburb community library to listen to Debra Brunner, CEO of The Together Plan Charity, talk about the work of her charity and their latest publication.

As part of her work Debra was in Minsk and was invited to have tea with a group of elderly

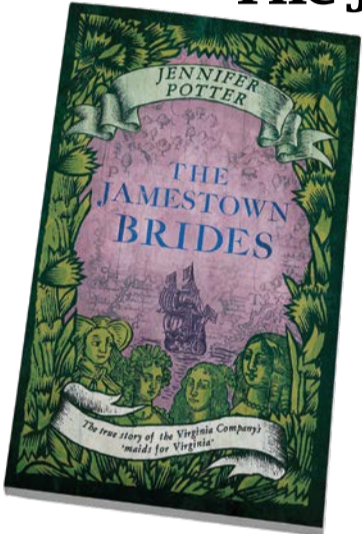
residents. She was presented with a book in Russian which she brought back to England, and once translated she found it was the individual memories of the people she had tea with, all of whom survived the Minsk Ghetto.

After much work, and also discovering additional survivors,

the book, *We Remember Lest the World Forget – Memories of the Minsk Ghetto*, has now been published in English.

Debra's charity works with Jewish communities in the region, revitalising them with the help of both adults and young people from the UK. A fascinating talk.

## The Jamestown Brides



was sending out young women of good reputation as brides for planters. They were the 'maids for Virginia' of Jennifer Potter's *The Jamestown Brides*.

Local author Jennifer Potter was born in Devon, and spent time in Malaysia, Jordan and Indonesia, reading French at Bristol University. She worked in journalism before turning her hand to writing. *The Jamestown Brides* is one of four novels and five non-fiction works. It traces – as much as it can, given the paucity of surviving records – the lives of 56 young women shipped to Virginia to become planters' wives in exchange for tobacco, the profits from which were to line the coffers of Virginia Company speculators.

The book searches for the women's motivation for leaving what was doubtless a less than idyllic life in England for an unknown, but certainly dangerous land across the Atlantic, as well as for what befell them after they arrived. First-hand information on the women is scarce – they were not the type to write letters and memoirs and probably could not write at all. Instead, Potter starts from lists of their names, parentage, age, birthplace and testimonials from trusted sources, and then finds what she can about them and their families in parish and court records.

While little can be learned directly about the women, Potter ably describes their general circumstances, gives us insight into the men who ran – and ran into the ground – the Virginia Company, and the environment in England that would make such a perilous journey into the unknown less of a hare-brained

scheme than it might seem from a 21st century viewpoint.

We get to understand what the journey across the ocean must have been like, and then what confronted the women once they arrived. Jamestown must have seemed a dismal, small and poor place. The women's story is not, for the most part, one of triumph. Not all of them found men willing to pay the bride price – though women were scarce, there were other, cheaper, ways to find a wife. And their fates are almost impossible to track, partially because relevant records were destroyed. Many of the 56 simply disappear from any records; Potter is only able to trace with some certainty the fates of four of them. Some will have been killed or taken captive in the Indian uprising that took place a mere three months after the women arrived – this is the book's most harrowing incident. Many must have succumbed to the diseases and hard living that early 17th century Jamestown offered.

The reader is left amazed that the colony actually survived. Certainly the people who settled in Virginia seemed less prepared to face New World circumstances than their contemporary fellow exiles in Massachusetts (founded in 1620), not that New Englanders had it easy, either.

## WORDSEARCH

In the first of our new series of Wordsearch in 2019 we have included the names of 20 modes of transport. One of them is highlighted to start you off. Names may be read in all directions, straight or diagonally. Please send your entries by email to [suburbnews@hgsra.uk](mailto:suburbnews@hgsra.uk) with your name and contact details. The closing date is June 17. All correct entries go into a draw to win a £20 book token. Good luck!

MARILYN GROSSMAN

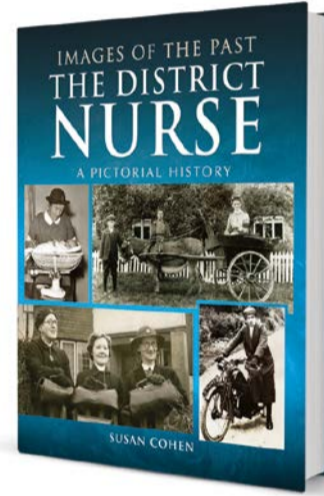
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## The District Nurse

The district nurse has always been part of the community, but when did district nursing really begin? After reading and looking at Susan Cohen's revealing new pictorial history, we can really understand how it evolved. Sick men, women and children have always been cared for at home since time immemorial, but it was not until the late 1800s that these dedicated women took on the role of the district nurse.

In those days life expectancy was short, infant mortality was high and medical knowledge was unscientific, and there was no professional training for nurses. As we know Florence Nightingale 1820-1910 was largely responsible for permanently changing the face of home nursing care and introduced professional training for nurses in 1860.

In 1887, when Queen Victoria celebrated her golden Jubilee, district nursing had been elevated to a new status. They were provided with resplendent uniforms. The wonderful black and white photographs in this



The book is a compelling read – meticulously researched and well written. Like Potter herself, I longed to know more about the individual lives of the women who willingly left one fairly stable if not particularly happy life for another undoubtedly unstable and probably perilous one. In lieu of these stories, Potter provides the reader with interesting and evocative contextual stories, vivid descriptions and insightful legal proceedings.

TINA ISAACS

*The Jamestown Brides: the untold story of England's 'maids for Virginia', Jennifer Potter (2018). London: Atlantic Books, £20.*

book, bring back a nostalgia for nurses in crisp white starched aprons, sky-blue dresses with stiff white collars, black lace-ups with thick black stockings. A sharp contrast to the nurses' scrubs of today.

Before the National Health Service, raising money to cover the cost of district nursing was a grave problem. How was the cost of wages, travel, accommodation, as well as expenses for essential items such as medicines and dressings to be provided for? There were the usual fêtes, flower shows and concerts but it was always a problem. The poor over-worked nurses earned between £25 and £30 per year.

Getting about was another difficulty. Their transport could be by donkey, bicycle, pony and cart, or even a tractor. In bad weather they had to walk for miles to remote areas to reach patients only to be confronted with epidemics of children with chicken-pox, influenza, blood-poisoning, typhoid and even head lice. Delivering babies was part of the nurse's role, 10% were home births. District nurses were available to 75% of the population.

During the wars, district nurses volunteered for active service. They helped in air raid shelters and first aid posts. Some joined the armed forces and civilian defence forces. They were very brave, refusing to give up on their patients even when caught up in air raids. Babies were born under bombardment. Mothers delivered

babies in dreadful circumstances. One district nurse recorded in her daily notes that visits were concluded with prayer and bible reading. Some nurses were so brave that they were awarded the George Medal for the courage and persistence with which they managed to save lives.

After the war things began to improve. They received a better, more practical uniform. Married women were able to remain in the profession. Infant mortality dropped to 1 in 1000. Male nurses were recruited, though they were only permitted to nurse male patients.

In 1948 with the inauguration of the National Health Service the provision of the district nurse became the responsibility of the county authority. Their services were now free to anyone and the nurses were paid by the state. Life became easier. Houses had telephones, nurses had cars and there was an emergency squad. However the role today of the district nurse is still as challenging as ever. The 19th Century slums may have gone, but poverty and deprivation still exist. Many of the diseases and ailments the early patients suffered from have been replaced by more complex illnesses and medical conditions, which make the job of the district nurse even more challenging.

STEPHANIE HURST

*Images of the Past: The District Nurse, Susan Cohen. Pen & Sword, £14.99.*

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