

# **Elsie Stephenson's legacy: nurse leaders in universities today**

**Fiona Ross**

**15 March 2012**

# The beginnings – sewing the seeds of a legacy



# Reflections on the integrated nursing degree

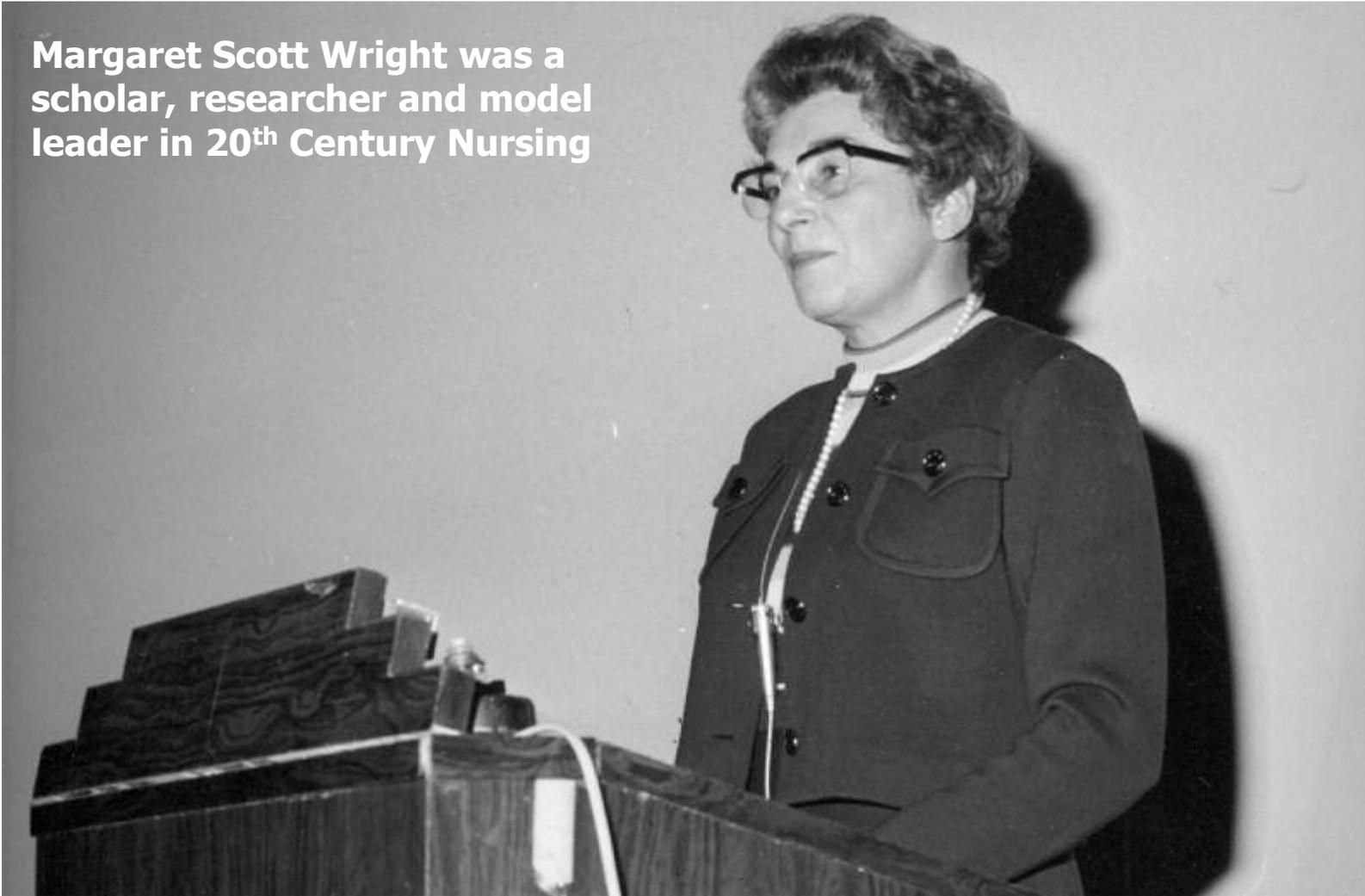
- Length and scope
- Health and community focus
- Encouraged to ask questions and collect evidence
- Teaching by the best



# **The leadership legacy**

# Margaret Scott Wright

**Margaret Scott Wright was a scholar, researcher and model leader in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Nursing**



# Professor Dame Jenifer Wilson-Barnett



Jenifer Wilson-Barnett with staff of the Dept of Nursing Studies of Chelsea College in 1987. Twelve of the people in this picture went on to be Professors elsewhere and others took up leadership roles in policy and the charitable sector.

**How far has the legacy  
reached?**

# Conversations with nurse leaders

## **Aim**

To explore the scope of the role and the personal, professional and academic challenges for nurses in leadership roles in universities in the UK

# Approach

- Telephone conversations with 10 Deans (nursing background)
- Evenly split between pre-1992 and post-1992 universities
- Most from England – 2 from Scotland
- Size of portfolios varied – 2 combined PVC roles

# The Leadership Context

- Working for two masters
- Research quality versus income and student numbers

- *"In the Russell Group universities there is a research-obsessed agenda with claims by the universities of being "dumbed down" by the NHS agenda, whereas in post 1992 universities the polarisation of agendas is about fulfilling the new universities' financial expectations (the money you bring in and the student numbers)"*

- *In the beginning nursing was small and invisible. Staff were practice/teaching orientated. When we won the tender which brought in a huge amount of money – nursing is now the largest income in the university – people in the wider university woke up to the importance of nursing in the university”*

# Leadership skills

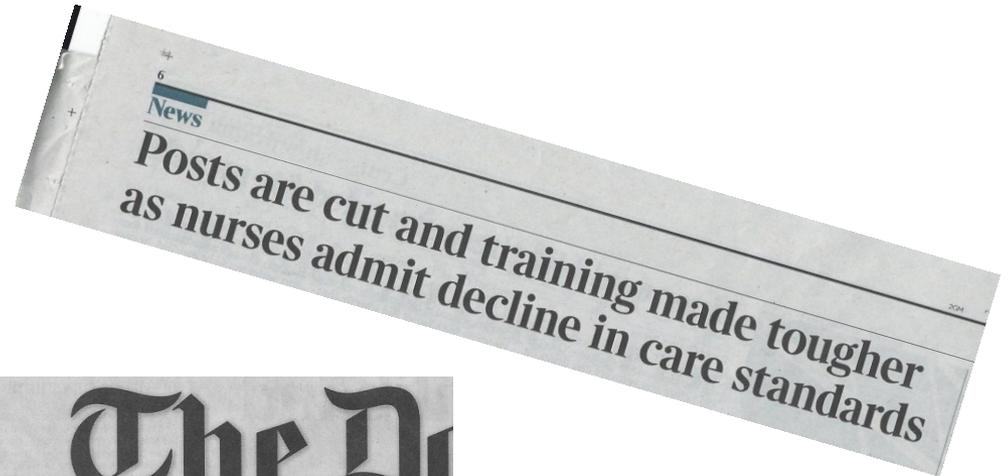
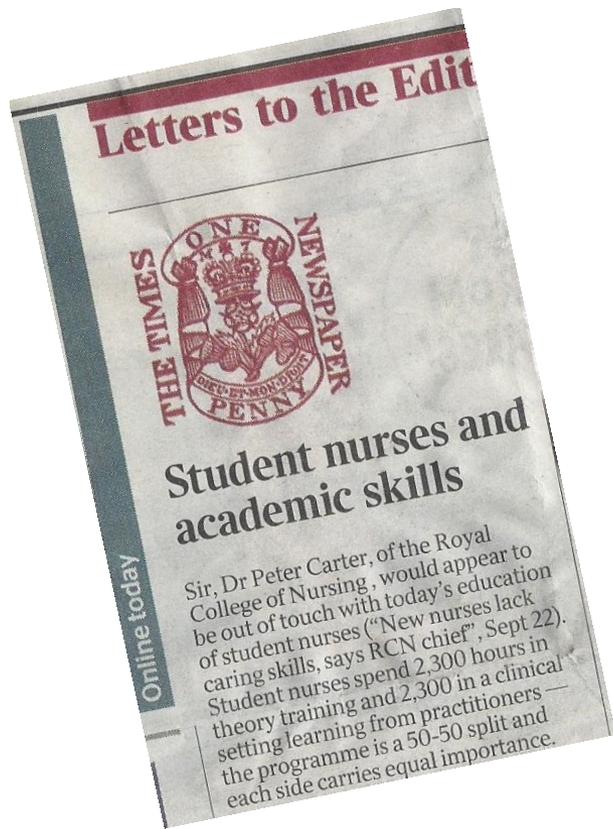
- Standing up and speaking out
- Interpersonal skills and resilience
- Pioneering and breaking new ground

# Legitimacy of nursing in higher education

- “What occupation more than nursing has allowed itself to be so routinised and thus allowed its enthusiastic young students to become dull, apathetic and subordinate? It should today be a leader in the field of social science, instead it is fighting for recognition as a profession – to produce imagination, vision and thought, what better place than the university”

(Elsie Stephenson)

# Academic nursing contested ground



# Challenges to the legitimacy of nursing in universities

“the biggest problem is for health service colleagues who hold deeply entrenched views that universities cannot educate nurses”

(pre 1992 Dean)

“the biggest challenge is dealing with nurses who have been qualified for 30 years who want things as they used to be. They do the biggest discredit to the profession”

(post 1992 Dean)

# Challenges to the legitimacy of nursing in universities

“the university does not see nursing as being a legitimate part.... universities are still male dominated institutions with deep-seated prejudice about nursing”

(post 1992 Dean)

# Conclusions - grounds for optimism

- System smaller and better quality
- University engagement with Trusts – reshaping partnerships and ‘doing it together’
- Building leaders for the future eg ‘rising star programme’ university and trust collaboration

# Conclusions – what is the legacy?

- New focus on translational and applied research
- New narrative for nursing - patients deserve to have the best nurses

*"Nursing is made up of little things; little things they are called, but they culminate in matters of life and death"*

*(Florence Nightingale)*

