

BRIGADIER JANE ARIGHO CBE RRC

Pro-Chancellor,

Brigadier Jane Arigho is a perioperative nurse who has served with great distinction in the British Army's medical services. After a series of increasingly senior posts in Army hospitals in the UK and overseas, and in the training of nurses, she became Director of Army Nursing Services in 1995. Later, as Director Defence Nursing Services, she established the unified military nursing organisation which is celebrated for its life-saving work in many conflicts including the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. After retirement Jane Arigho was Colonel Commandant of the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps from 2005 until 2008.

Jane Arigho was born in Dublin and trained there at St Vincent's Hospital, where strictly disciplinarian nuns provided an excellent education for nursing. It wasn't her first choice of career: Jane comes from a long line of vets and wanted to follow in those footsteps, but was advised by an uncle that she would not be strong enough to handle the large animals which the practice dealt with. So nursing it was, and St Vincent's quickly showed that this was Jane's forte. The Hospital had a reputation for providing Army nurses, and after her fourth year at St Vincent's Jane decided that this was a good way to spread her wings. She had trained in operating theatre nursing, and now took this specialism into the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (known as the QAs) at the Military Hospital, Millbank in London.

And so began what Jane calls 'the big adventure'. After a posting to the British Military Hospital Dhekelia in Cyprus, during the more peaceful times before partition, Jane went to Canada on a two-year exchange posting in 1976, first to Ottawa and then Cold Lake in Northern Alberta, where she trained in aeromedical evacuation procedures. Fortunately, exercises often took her away from Cold Lake's morning temperatures of -34 Celsius to Florida and Texas. More appointments in military hospitals in the UK and Germany followed, after which Jane was appointed Recruit Company Commander at the QAs' Training Centre in Aldershot.

After this, promotion meant a move into hospital administration at the Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital Woolwich. Jane says that she had to be 'dragged kicking and screaming' into this new role, but she took readily to it and excelled. Later, as Theatre Superintendant at Woolwich, she headed an elite team which could respond instantly to medical emergencies. Then came a move to the Duchess of Kent's Military Hospital at Catterick as Matron, a posting which also carried responsibility for outlying medical centres from Colchester to Benbecula in the Outer Hebrides. This was followed by the headship of nursing in all British military hospitals in what was then West Germany.

The 1990s brought fundamental changes in military nursing, and Jane was involved in these at increasingly senior levels. In 1993 she returned to the QA Training Centre as its last Commandant, and supervised its closure. Following

further senior posts in the administration and training of Army nurses, in 1995 she was appointed Director Army Nursing Services, Matron-in-Chief (Army) and Queen's Honorary Nursing Sister. As head of the QAs her main priority was implementing the 1995 Defence Cost Study's decision to close military hospitals and replace them with military-staffed wards and military wings in NHS hospitals. Success in this high-profile project led to still greater challenges as she was promoted Brigadier, the highest rank at that time of any woman in British Army, and Director Defence Nursing Services. This gave her responsibility for all the nursing resources of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force until her retirement in 1999.

The end of the Cold War brought great changes to the armed forces and to military nursing. Jane Arigho presided over these changes in her years of senior leadership, and the medical services which have distinguished themselves in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts owe much to the developments she introduced. Nurses of all services now train and work together, and their training inevitably focuses more strongly on current geopolitical and military situations, and on responses to accident and trauma. The care of injured service personnel has come a long way from the scenes portrayed in the TV series *MASH* to the high-technology field hospitals that we now see on the news. Medical, technological and organisational advances mean that casualties in Afghanistan can now be taken to a UK hospital, in a flying intensive care ward, in 19 hours if necessary.

But frontline military medical services face many of the same challenges as did previous generations, and Jane is no stranger to the harsh realities of war. Visiting her teams of nurses in Bosnia, during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, she witnessed scenes of devastation far worse than television could show. Grim experiences of this kind impact as heavily on nurses as other military personnel, and Jane has given much time to the sensitive management of personal issues arising from service in war zones. 'What I joined', she says, 'was a family', and even as Director she was always happiest leaving her desk and spending time with her nurses in hospitals or on exercises with them in the field.

Jane Arigho's distinguished service and notable successes have been highly honoured. She was awarded the Associate Royal Red Cross in 1987, and was advanced to the Royal Red Cross in 1995. This decoration, created by Queen Victoria in 1883, is awarded for exceptional services, devotion to duty and professional competence in British military nursing, and its first recipient was none other than Florence Nightingale. On retirement Jane was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire. In addition to these high distinctions, in 2005 Her Majesty The Queen appointed her Colonel Commandant of the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps. This honorary role, akin to that of a non-executive director, brought Jane the great pleasure of working with senior nurses she had trained at Aldershot years earlier.

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Brigadier Jane Arigho, and ask you to confer upon her the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*.