



Press Release

12 December 2017

Stephen McGann, Dr Turner and Call the Midwife

The grand finale of the QNI's 130th anniversary year took place on 27 November at the Royal Garden Hotel in London.

We were delighted to have as our guest speaker the actor Stephen McGann, who plays the character of Dr Turner in the hit BBC television series 'Call the Midwife'. Dr Crystal Oldman CBE, QNI's chief executive introduced Stephen to the audience of Queen's Nurses, National Garden Scheme garden owners and other supporters of the charity.

Stephen spoke about the origins of the television series, taken from the memoirs of retired midwife, Jennifer Worth and adapted for television by his wife, the writer Heidi Thomas. The character of Dr Turner appeared in the first series and develops as the programme moves into the 1960s. Stephen revealed the huge depth of historical and professional research that underpins the programme – in particular the role of the programme's midwife adviser, Terri Coates. This authenticity and realism is, in Stephen's view, one of the reasons for the programme's great success.

He gave a very moving account of how the programme had dealt with the subject of Thalidomide – the 'miracle drug' that had very serious side effects and left many people born at the beginning of the 1960s with significant birth defects and life-long disabilities. Stephen spoke about how telling these stories had changed him and how he has worked with the Thalidomide Trust, the charity that supports people affected, to understand their experiences and to ensure their story was told with compassion, truth and respect.

Stephen also spoke about his new book, 'Flesh and Blood – A History of my Family in Seven Maladies'. In it he traces the history of the McGann family who moved to Liverpool from Ireland at the time of the Potato Famine. The book combines his love of medicine, genealogy and drama to answer the question, how have these things made him the person he is today?

I was honoured to be invited to speak to an organisation that has done so much to promote the values and importance of nursing, particularly in our communities. The QNI has at its heart the same values we cherish on Call the Midwife – humanity, compassion and dignity expressed through expertise, and delivered for the benefit of everyone. A demonstration of the very best that our society can be.

Stephen McGann

On behalf of the QNI, I would like to thank Stephen for his amazing contribution to the art and science of healthcare and his most generous support for our anniversary year.

Dr Crystal Oldman CBE

