

HISTORY ON YOUR DOORSTEP

Explore WW1 heroine & nurse Matron Edith Cavell



Edith Louisa Cavell is very special to us in Norfolk because she was born in Swardeston, a village not far from Norwich.

Look at these photographs.

Which one shows Edith in her nurse's uniform?

Do nurses dress like this now?

Are her clothes in the other photo different to ours?



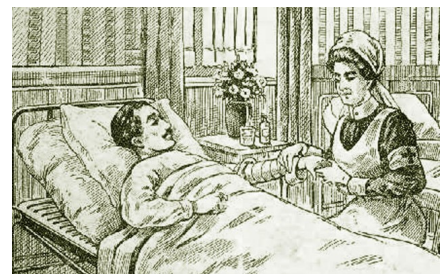
This is Swardeston church where Edith's dad was vicar back in Victorian times. Edith was born in 1865 in a house not far from the church. Edith liked to play in the fields around this church. She liked drawing and painting flowers and birds. Edith went to boarding schools until she was 18 years old. She decided to become a Governess. This is an old fashioned name for a teacher. She got a job teaching some rich children whose family lived in a big house near Norwich.

Edith liked helping people. She read her Bible every day and loved Jesus very much. She went to work in the city of Brussels in Belgium for a short time. She was a Governess there.

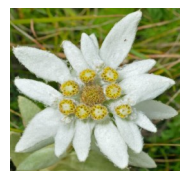
When Edith was 30 years old she decided that she wanted to help people more, like Jesus did, so she decided to train to be a nurse. She had to go to a college at a big hospital in London. She read books that Florence Nightingale had written about how to be a good nurse.

Edith worked hard in a few hospitals.

She became a Matron. This is the name for the nurse in charge of a hospital.



Edith was asked to go and be Matron in charge of this hospital and nurses' training school in Brussels. She was very excited about this. She chose the edelweiss flower as the symbol for her nurses' badge to remind them that she believed God is good to all people.





Here is Matron Edith with her team of nurses in Brussels. Look at their uniforms and hats.



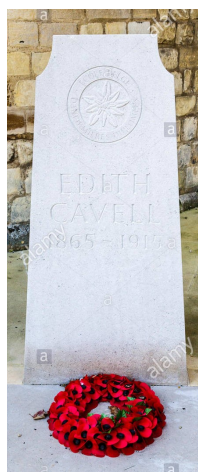
When the first world war began Edith decided to stay with her team in Brussels. Soon the Germany army marched into Belgium and took over the city. Matron Edith asked her nurses to be brave and strong and to keep helping everyone.



Many soldiers were badly hurt in the battles. Helpers from the city began to bring wounded soldiers to Matron Edith . She looked after them, then she helped them to escape. Many English soldiers got back to England. She was brave and said that she would look after everyone, just like Jesus did.

The German army leaders were angry with her. They said she was breaking their rules by caring for enemy soldiers. They arrested her in 1915 and put her in prison.

On 12th October 1915 Matron Edith was shot dead by German army firing squad. This made everyone very sad. In 1919 she was brought back to London and there was a funeral in Westminster Abbey. She was then buried outside Norwich Cathedral.



This is Edith with her friend Jack the dog. She used to take Jack with her on his lead when she helped the soldiers to escape.



Find out more about Matron Edith Cavell from:

www.cavellnursestrust.org

BBC bitesize KS1 Edith Cavell

www.nationalgeographickids EC facts for kids.

Order a fully illustrated story book about Edith told by Jack her dog 'One Step Ahead Jack' - £5.00 from e: headofschools@cathedral.org.uk

Things to do...

- Pretend you are one of Edith's nurses. Tell everyone about her and what it is like working in the hospital in Brussels
- Find out more about WW1
- Design a memorial poster to remember Matron Edith and show the brave things that she did on it.
- Take a look at the other worksheets here on this site about Edith Cavell
- Make some paper poppies, these are used to remember all who died in the war each November. You will find templates and instructions if you do a Google search.
- Find out more about Jack, Edith's dog! On www.iwm.org.uk

