Elsie

STATUE FOR ELSIE INGLIS

Dr Elsie Inglis

Key Facts: Who was Elsie Inglis?

Early Life and Education

- Elsie was born in India in 1864. Both her parents were from Scotland. When Elsie was 14 years old, her family moved back to Edinburgh.
- Elsie studied medicine and became one the first women to be registered with the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons. She was one of Edinburgh's foremost female doctors and surgeons, setting up a medical practice in Walker Street, Edinburgh and later a Women's Maternity Hospital on The Royal Mile for the poorest families in the Old Town.

Believing in Women's Rights

- Elsie campaigned for the right for women to vote in elections and to make it possible for women to have careers in medicine and to ensure all women could access the medical care they needed.
- Elsie became a key member of the Edinburgh's National Society for Women's Suffrage. She believed that the only way things were going to change was when women had the vote. She became a campaigner and speaker, making speeches all over the UK.

Her Role in World War One

- When WW1 began in 1914, Elsie seized her chance to promote women's involvement in the war effort. This was met with contempt after her initial approach to the War Office offering the services of qualified women surgeons and doctors to the frontline troops, Elsie was famously told to "My Good Lady Go Home and Sit Still."
- Elsie raised the equivalent of over £50 million pounds and within months of the start of WW1 formed the Scottish Women's Hospital for Foreign Service. Fully equipped Hospital Units run mostly by women nurses, doctors, ambulance drivers, cooks and orderlies were sent out to support thousands of allies across France, Serbia, Corsica, Salonika, Romania, Russia, and Malta.
- Elsie became the Chief Medical Officer of front-line units in Serbia, dealing with the war casualties and a typhus epidemic. It is said in Scotland she became a doctor; in Serbia she became a saint.

Her Final Years

- Elsie was taken prisoner by the Germans in Serbia and was repatriated. She spent more time fundraising and planning new campaigns to support Serbs in Romania and Russia, she then travelled back to support.
- In early November 1917 the British Navy evacuated Elsie's unit and her staff from Archangel, northern Russia and she travelled, back by ship to Newcastle. She had been ill for some time.
- Her family rushed to be with her, and she died the next day. Thousands lined the Edinburgh streets for her funeral in St Giles Cathedral. British and Serbian royalty attended her funeral. Buried with full military honours Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh.

Her Awards and Honours

- Elsie became the first woman to be awarded the Order of the White Eagle by the Crown Prince Alexander of Serbia at a ceremony in London.
- After her death, her remarkable achievements were recognised with medals from the SWH, British Committee of French Red Cross and the Russian Government.

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Timeline of Elsie's life

1864
Elsie was born in India

1878
Moved back to Edinburgh with her family.

1887
Elsie begins her studies at the Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women

1892
Elsie passes her examinations for triple qualification (as a doctor, surgeon, and educator) becoming a Licentiate of the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeon in Scotland.

1894
Elsie set up a medical practice with Dr Jessie MacGregor in Walker Street, Edinburgh.

1904
The Hospice, was opened by Elsie on The Royal Mile at 219 High Street to provide health care for women and their babies in the poorest part of Edinburgh.

1906
Elsie joined the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies as a suffragist, helping to set up the Scottish Women's Suffrage Federation.

1914
WW1 begins. Elsie offers the War Office ready-made medical units staffed by qualified women to serve in front line hospitals. Her offer was declined.

1914
Elsie set up SWH in 11 war affected countries across Europe with over 1000 women from many countries taking part.

1916
Elsie receives the Order of the White Eagle, the highest Serbian honour for heroism.

1917
Elsie died in Newcastle of cancer and is buried at Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh.

Key Vocabulary	
Allies	The countries, people, and armies united against Germany in WW1.
Campaign	Organised action to achieve a goal.
Licentiate	From 1884 -1909 only 7% of woman achieved this combined medical and surgical qualification called the Triple Qualification at the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons in Edinburgh and Glasgow.
Repatriated	Sent back to her country
Suffrage	In 1897 National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), led by Millicent Fawcett, believed in a peaceful and non-confrontational approach to gaining votes for women. Members believed that success could be gained by persuasion and education. In 1903, Emmeline Pankhurst and other women, frustrated by the lack of progress, decided more direct action was required and founded the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) with the motto 'Deeds not words'. The WSPU were involved in more violent acts, including attacks on property and law-breaking, which resulted in imprisonment and hunger strikes.
SWH	The Scottish Women's Hospitals for Foreign Services (SWH) was founded in 1914.
WW1	World War One often abbreviated as WWI, began on 28 July 1914, and ended on 11 November 1918