

# Young people explore the lesser known life and legacy of Edith Cavell

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Nurse Edith Cavell Imperial War Museums

Now a Norwich-based young people's project, designed and led by a team of undergraduates from the University of East Anglia, will focus on other aspects of her life including her upbringing in Norfolk, her achievements as a nurse and her bravery alongside other women who also worked to help allied soldiers escape from the German military authorities.

The Forum's commemorative project *A Nurse Misremembered?* has been made possible by a £9,500 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Whereas Cavell's story is often dominated by her death in front of a German firing squad in Brussels in 1915, the latest project will offer an insight into lesser known aspects of her life, work and personality. A particular emphasis will be on the issues of gender as they related to Cavell and continue to relate to nursing. The project will also consider the question of what constitutes bravery in peace and war.

The project will research the stories of others that worked alongside her, helping British and French soldiers to escape back to allied lines. These included two women, Louise Thuliez, condemned to death with Cavell but saved from execution by the intervention of the King of Spain, and Princess

Marie de Croy who was sentenced to ten years hard labour.

The group of young people researching the project will also look at how Cavell's death became a propaganda tool that was used to support Britain's war effort and the effect of that propaganda on subsequent understandings of Cavell. The group will also be looking at how Cavell's work as a nurse before World War One helped to modernise the profession.

The project, which will be completed by November this year, will create a pop-up exhibition that will be displayed at three venues around Norwich. Children will have the chance to colour in propaganda posters, family activities will include dressing in First World War costumes, and a Reflection Wall will give visitors the chance to record the feelings about Cavell after attending the events.

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: "Edith Cavell's many achievements – not least her impact on nursing – are often overshadowed by the circumstances surrounding her death. The project will bring to the fore a more rounded appreciation of one of Norfolk's most famous women."

Minister for the Government's First World War Centenary programme, Helen Grant, added: "The First World War saw heroism, bravery and moral courage displayed in countless stories, too many of which have been lost in time. Edith Cavell's contribution is well known but what is less familiar is how she came to play her part. HLF's support for this project means that the whole of her life - and the role of other women at that time - will be captured and preserved. It is especially fitting that the work will be undertaken by young people, helping ensure that the events of a hundred years ago live on in the minds of those growing up today."

Dr Richard Maguire, Senior Lecturer in Public History from the University of East Anglia, who is helping the students in their work said: "This is a fantastic achievement for a group of second-year undergraduates from UEA. This project began as coursework in their module. Their hard work and imagination has meant that they are now running a major project in the anniversary year of Cavell's death, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. They are a splendid and talented group of young people."

Tim Bishop, Chief Executive at the Forum, said: "We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund is supporting what is a unique partnership between the Forum and the University of East Anglia's School of History, and Faculty of Nursing & Health Sciences. The students' research and resulting exhibition will enable the local community to engage with the lesser known aspects of the life of Edith Cavell, a young nurse from Swardeston in Norfolk."

The Forum's volunteer researchers will be working with UEA's library and archives and UEA's School of Nursing, the East Anglian Film Archive and the Norfolk Records Office to gather information about Edith Cavell's life.

### **Notes to editors**

The Forum, in the centre of Norwich, is one of the UK's most successful Millennium projects. It is a public building and is open seven days a week, all year round (except Christmas Day and Boxing Day). Everyone is welcome. Most of the events, exhibitions and activities which take place at The

Forum are free.

The Forum Trust is the independent, self-financing, charitable organisation which manages The Forum. It is responsible for The Forum's continued development, growth and innovation.

The trust works with many partners to ensure The Forum plays a valuable role in the community. Details about the charitable 'project purpose' which under-pins The Forum are on [The Forum's website](#).

### **Further information**

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