

# Lottery grant to tell the heroic story of First World War nurse Edith Cavell

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Edith Cavell (2nd row from the front, 4th from the left) at the nurse training school she ran in Brussels around 1912

A First World War nurse and pioneer of modern nursing, Cavell was executed in 1915 by occupying forces for her role in helping over 200 allied troops escape Belgium.

A professional nurse, Cavell worked in a hospital in Brussels that was taken over by the Red Cross during the First World War. Even before her death she was well-known for her treatment of all soldiers as equals, regardless of nationality. In 1915 she was arrested and tried in a military court along with 33 others for helping over 200 allied soldiers escape into neutral Holland. She was shot by firing squad on 12 October 1915.

This project will explore and share the many stories surrounding Cavell's life and death: the use of her death as propaganda to drive allied recruitment; the ceremonial repatriation of her body to the UK in 1919; her work in Belgium during the war; and her role as a key figure in the professionalisation of nursing in the early 20th century.

Spanning 18 months, local people and volunteers across the East of England, West Midlands and London will take part in a variety of activities exploring Cavell's legacy. Volunteers will undertake

extensive research that will be shared through events and workshops. Local people will be able to take part in guided walks and heritage trails and a number of exhibitions will take place across the UK. Research and activities from the project will also feed into a dedicated website which will include images, newsreels and audio memories of descendants of those helped by Cavell.

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said: "Edith Cavell was and continues to be an inspiration across the world. The Centenary of the First World War provides a moment not only to explore the incredible bravery she demonstrated in order to help others but also her outstanding professional achievements and the legacy she has left for modern day nursing."

Simon Knighton, Chairman of Cavell Nurses' Trust, said: "In keeping with the Edith Cavell legacy we are providing welfare assistance and scholarship support to nurses all around the country, and with a particular emphasis in Norfolk. Our plans to increase public awareness of the history and values embodied in Nurse Edith Cavell herself will be of enormous assistance to the Trust and we are very grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for supporting this."

Helen Grant, Minister for the First World War Centenary Programme, today pledged up to £50,000 to restore Edith Cavell's grave in Norwich Cathedral. In addition, the grant will create a memorial garden, planted with Edith Cavell roses and new pathways to help access for those attending the annual ceremonies.

Commenting on the HLF grant to the Cavell Trust, Helen Grant said: "The Trust will now be able to tell Edith Cavell's story in a way that brings it alive for everyone and celebrates the depth and richness of her life and work. Better yet, it will help take this story around the country to help secure her legacy."

### **Notes to editors**

[Cavell Nurses' Trust](#) is a registered charity that supports the UK's 650,000 student, working and retired nurses, midwives and healthcare assistants who need financial help and support following illness, injury and other difficulties.

The trust, based in Redditch, Worcestershire, was established in 1917 in memory of Edith Cavell who died in German-occupied Belgium in 1915 after helping more than 200 Allied soldiers to escape. It has provided financial support worth more than £2.5million over the last five years to thousands of working and retired nurses, healthcare assistants and student nurses in need. The trust has launched a Centenary appeal culminating in the 100th anniversary of Edith Cavell's death in October 2015, which will feature a climb up Mount Edith Cavell in Canada in August 2015.

### **Further information**

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## Helping to tell the story of Edith Cavell