

# Memorials to Edith Cavell



War Memorials Trust

## Introduction

Edith Cavell was a British nurse who worked in Belgium at the start of World War I. In 1915 she was executed by Germany for treason. After her death various memorials to her were erected around the world. This sheet gives information on some of those in the UK and can be used by pupils as a resource during lessons. Further information about Edith Cavell can be found in War Memorials Trust's 'Edith Cavell' helpsheet for teachers which may be used to assist lesson planning.

## St Martin's Place, London

One of the most prominent and well known memorials to Edith Cavell in the UK is situated in St Martin's Place, just off Trafalgar Square opposite the National Portrait Gallery in London. The memorial was designed by Sir George Frampton and unveiled on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1920 by Queen Alexandra, but the creation of the memorial had been discussed since shortly after Cavell's death in 1915, making it one of the earliest memorial projects of World War I.

The memorial consists of a statue of Cavell in the uniform of a nurse. The likeness was modelled on Cavell's sister. This is stood on a plinth, on the front of which is an inscription reading "Edith Cavell/Brussels/Dawn/October 12<sup>th</sup>/1915. Patriotism is not enough/I must have no/hatred or bitterness for anyone." The last section of this inscription are the words Cavell spoke to the chaplain who was with her the night before she died, and were only added to the memorial in 1922 after petitioning by the National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland. There was some debate over the exact wording used by Cavell but these are the words selected by her family.

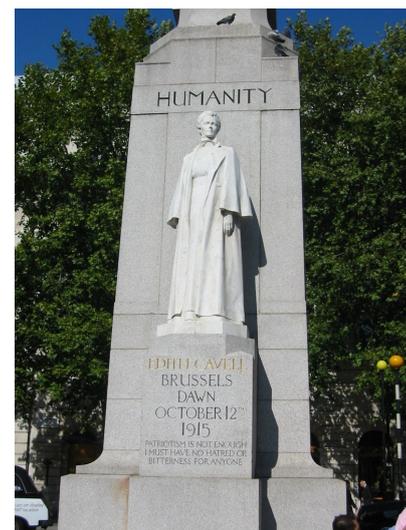
Behind the statue is a taller granite rectangular pillar, around the top of which on each of the four sides are inscribed the words Fortitude, Humanity, Sacrifice and Devotion. On the rear face of this is a relief carving of a lion standing over a serpent, symbolising defeat of malice and treachery. Above this the memorial tapers into a cross and sculpture of a woman and infant. On the front of the cross shaft is the inscription "For King and Country." The entire monument stands on a three stepped base.

The memorial was first listed in 1970 at Grade II. In 2014, shortly before the centenary of the outbreak of World War I, its status was upgraded to Grade I in recognition of the memorial's significance. Its list description states that as well as being an early war memorial project, the fact that it commemorates an individual woman also makes it rare giving it significant historical interest.

## Norwich Cathedral

After World War I Edith Cavell's body was returned to the UK. Following a memorial service in Westminster Abbey she was brought to Norfolk and laid to rest in the grounds of Norwich Cathedral. There is a memorial to Cavell within the cathedral grounds consisting of a bronze bust of her on a tapering stone plinth. On the front of this

Edith Cavell memorial, London © WMT, 2007



plinth there is a relief carving of a soldier with one arm on his rifle and the other reaching up towards two laurel wreaths situated at the top of the plinth. The base of the plinth carries the inscription "Edith Cavell Nurse/Patriot and Martyr."

Works to conserve the memorial were carried out in 2014 to ensure it is in good condition in time for the centenary of Cavell's death in 2015.

Edith Cavell's grave is also in the grounds of the cathedral and alongside this is a plaque giving information about her. This includes the words she spoke the night before her death which are inscribed on her memorial in London (see above).



Edith Cavell memorial, Norwich cathedral © Janet A Fancy, 2013.

### Swardeston

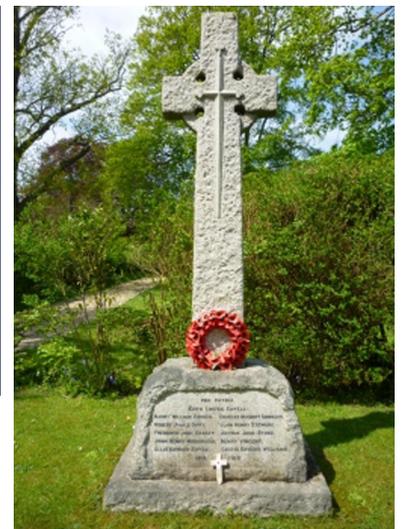
Cavell's home village's main war memorial is a stone wheel cross with a downward pointing sword carved in relief on the front face. It lists the names of those from the village who died in World War I, and Cavell is included in this list. There are also other memorials, such as a stained glass window depicting Cavell, within the village church.

### Hunstanton

A simpler memorial to Cavell can be found in Hunstanton. This memorial takes the form of a wooden bench with the words "Edith Cavell Norfolk's noble nurse 'Dawn' 12<sup>th</sup> October 1915" inscribed along the back rest.



Swardeston war memorial cross © Michael Hill, 2013.



### Other memorials

There are many other dedications and memorials to Edith Cavell around the UK, some of which take the form of buildings such as chapels and hospitals, reflecting the work she did.



Edith Cavell memorial bench, Hunstanton © J Websper, 2013.

**War Memorials Trust 14 Buckingham Palace Road London SW1W 0QP**

**Telephone: 020 7834 0200 / 0300 123 0764**

**Email: [learning@warmemorials.org](mailto:learning@warmemorials.org) Website: [www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org)**

**Registered Charity Number: 1062255**

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