

## 2 sisters called Cavell – (Florence 1867 – 1950) 83 years



### Edith Cavell

Edith Cavell was a British nurse who served in the First World War (1914-1918). She treated soldiers from either side and helped over 200 Allied soldiers escape from German-occupied Belgium. She was arrested and killed by German forces in 1915.

Daughter of Rev. Frederick V. Cavell and Louisa Sophia Cavell. Sister of Edith Louisa Cavell; Mary Lilian Wainright and John Frederick Scott Cavell

### The Story of Edith Cavell

The name of Edith Cavell may be familiar to some. She was of course the English nurse who is remembered for saving the lives of soldiers on both sides of the war in WWI. Edith was executed by the Germans in October 1915 for helping over 200

Allied soldiers escape from enemy-occupied territory at noon. It was alleged that Edith fainted after watching the firing squad shoot other traitors, the commanding officer told the firing squad to shoot, but they could not do so the officer removed his revolver and shot her at blank range.

Edith was born in 1865 in Norfolk and was educated at home by her father. When she turned 16, she was educated at boarding schools in Clevedon, Somerset, and Peterborough. These were finishing schools where a young woman of good social standing could learn the skills to become a good wife or, if she found herself wanting a husband, could fit into the home of an upper-class family as their governess.

Edith fell in love with her second cousin, Eddie. However, Eddie refused to marry her as he suffered from a genetic nervous condition. In 1890 Edith moved to Brussels to take up the position of governess. In 1895, Edith returned to her home in Swardston, Norfolk to nurse her sick father, Frederick, who was the vicar of the local church. With Edith's nursing, her father's health soon improved and this is said to have inspired her to pursue a career in nursing.

Edith registered the following September at the London Hospital School of Nursing and began her training. In 1897 there was a typhoid epidemic in Maidstone, Kent and Edith was seconded to the local hospital, along with nine other probationers. She earned the "**Maidstone Medal**" for her service. In 1899 Edith completed her training and worked in several London institutes and infirmaries before returning to Brussels in 1907. Here she became the director of the Berkendael Institute in Brussels, the first of its kind in Belgium and her pioneering work led her to be considered the founder of modern nursing education in that country.



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*You might wonder why I'm telling you about a woman with no obvious connection to Withernsea. Well, you see, Edith did have a connection.*



### **Brief Life History of Florence Mary Scott Cavell.**

When Florence Mary Scott Cavell was born in 1867, in Swardeston, Norfolk, England, United Kingdom, her father, Reverend Frederick Cavell, was 43, and her mother, Louisa Sophia Warming, was 32.

Florence lived in Bobbing, Kent, in 1911. At the age of 44, her occupation was listed as Matron at a hospital for infectious diseases. She died on 2 June 1950, in Kingston upon Hull, Yorkshire, England, United Kingdom, at the age of 83.

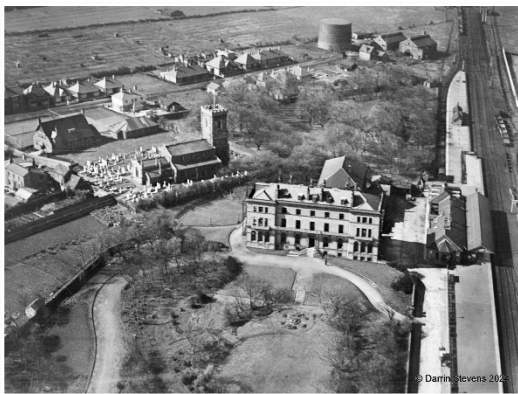
### **Florence was two years younger than Edith Cavell.**

Reverend Frederick Cavell and his wife Louisa had four children: three daughters and a son - Edith Louisa, Lillian, Florence Mary Scott, and John Fredrick Scott. All three sisters chose a career in nursing (their brother went into insurance), Florence and Lillian had likely followed a similar educational path as their older sister Edith. Unlike Edith, their history is not as well documented, **but it is Florence who provides us with a link to Withernsea.**

In 1855 the Queen's Hotel was built by the Northeastern Railway. When the hotel closed in 1892 it was bought by Francis and James Reckitt who donated it to the Hull Royal Infirmary. The following year it opened as a convalescent home. In 1913 Florence Mary Scott Cavell moved to Withernsea to take up the post of matron at the Hull and East Riding Convalescent Home.



This is most likely a picture of the Convalescent home staff taken in 1913. Picture provided by Yvonne Dedman. Her great aunt Pauline Randall (1898-1992) is in the third row on the left, almost under the white plank leaning against the wall. She has drawn a ring around herself. In the dark dress top left is Florence Mary Scott Cavell who was Matron of the Withernsea Convalescent home from 1913 until 1945.



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Florence intended to stay for *only a year*, but it was a post that she was to hold for the next thirty.

In March 1919 Florence Cavell brought the body of her sister, Edith, back home to the Norfolk village where she was born. A memorial service was held at Westminster Abbey on May 15, 1919. Her coffin, draped in a Union flag, was carried through the streets of London. Thousands turned out to watch. After the service, the coffin was taken by train to Norfolk Cathedral where Edith Cavell is buried. Florence worked tirelessly to see that Edith's dream of a home for sick, old, tired, or convalescing nurses came true. In 1920 the Daily Mail reported on a garden fete, held by the Girls Club of the Withernsea branch of the National British Women's Temperance Association (NBWTA) which was raising funds for The Edith Cavell Homes of Rest for Nurses. Florence's efforts meant that six such convalescent homes were already up and running.



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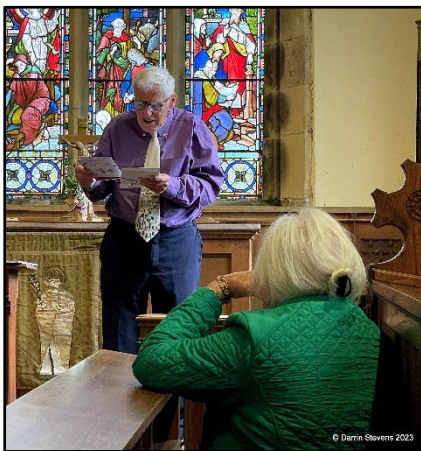
Florence retired from hospital life in 1946. Three years later she was visiting Leeds for Christmas. As she crossed the Headrow she was hit by a car and suffered serious head injuries. Admitted to Leeds General Infirmary, Florence was x-rayed to see if she had fractured her skull. Fortunately, she hadn't and was allowed to return to her home at **227b (Top flat) Queen Street, Withernsea, East Riding. A home once owned by Cllr Brian Cloke and since 2021 Mr & Mrs Stevens.**



The following summer Florence Mary Scott Cavell passed away peacefully in the place where she had given 30 years of service - **the Hull and East Riding Convalescent Home.**

Florence was buried on the Grounds of St Nicholas Church near the right-hand side at the rear of the clock tower. This has had many visits and is looked after By Peter Cook MBE and the friends of St Nicholas Church. You can often see flowers laid by Peter Cook's good lady wife who was trained and worked at the same hospital as Edith Cavell in London.

As an adult, Florence never spoke of her age. It was said that she guarded the secret well. Her age was published at the time of her death and many in Withernsea were surprised by it.



***I think I'll help her keep her secret,*** In 2023 The first ***Violet Day*** was held in Withernsea St Nicholas Church and organised by "Friends of St Nicholas - Flo (Tracey) Stevens" after 4 years of restoration by the Church Conservation Trust.

On Saturday, October 21st Over two hundred people came to St Nicholas church to talks given by our local Withernsea Poet and storyteller Godfrey Holmes hosted four history talks to remember the Cavell sisters who dedicated years of service to the First World War efforts and

healthcare services. Godfrey also spoke of his childhood studying the story of the sisters in Sunday School. He previously travelled to Bodiam Castle in East Sussex to inspect the Cavell Van: the carriage that transported her exhumed body from a crowded Dover Docks to equally crowded Charing Cross. Much later, Godfrey visited Withernsea's Convalescent hospital.



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Among those listening to the talk were Mr & Mrs Herbert of Hollym. Mr Herbert said that Edith was the aunt of his paternal grandmother, and the couple visited the grave in the grounds of St Nicholas Church throughout the year. They were delighted when asked to lay the wreath for Edith.



Doris Cook wife of Peter Cook, who was also impressed by Godfrey's talk and was honoured to be asked to lay the wreath for Florence Cavell whose grave she visits regularly.



### The Blue Black

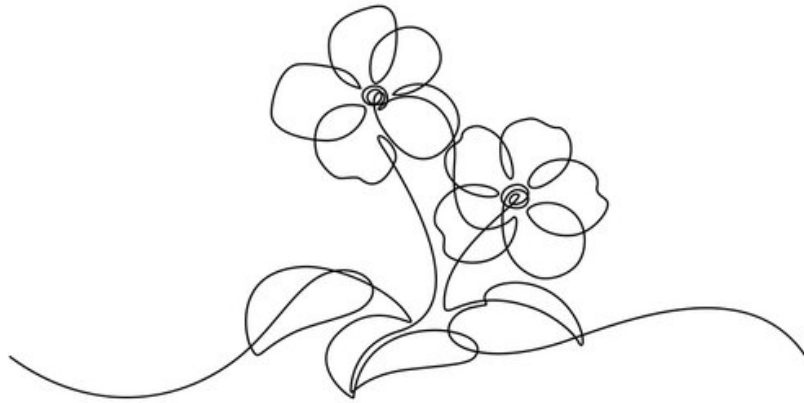
Wording by Godfrey Holmes and design by Darrin Stevens have decided to make a tribute Blue Plaque for our own Withernsea Heroine Nurse Edith Cavell with the wording you can see in the artwork to the left. The flower image is a portrait of Edith Cavell's favourite flower the Violet and can be seen in an earlier picture of Florence selling them in London at the foot of Edith's monument, in London.

So why are we asking for a donation of £250.00 towards the plaque – The cost of the plaque is £622.20 + VAT and Godfrey and I have already paid for that, however, we need to have it installed properly and pay for an extra coating so the sea air is kept at bay – it will be placed above the front door of 227 Queen street as this was the home for Florence Mary Scott Cavell for as long as she lived, worked and died in Withernsea. A fitting tribute to her service to the town. I think it would be fitting that the Withernsea Town Council help with this cost so that it can be used to advertise why we have such a good heritage enhanced by these great people of Withernsea. It's an opportunity for us all to be part of this amazing town through our history, two amazing women along with our very own Kay Kendall "**lifting the spirits of our town**".

One final note, Florence also donated £1.00 to the Withernsea War Memorial clock back in 1945, and on the Violet Day Tribute in October 2023, Flo Stevens (227 Queen Street) helped raise £100.00 to the War Memorial Clock in both Edith's and Florence's Cavell name.



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### *Three outstanding women with one connection, Withernsea*



Just one last note the Florence Cavell Plaque is made by the same organisation that created Captain Tom Moore's plaque whose remarkable fundraising efforts raised over £30 million for the NHS and lifted the spirits of the world during the pandemic 2020 and the Blue background BS 20D45 with White Border cast Aluminium 300mm.

***In anticipation thank you for your support.***

***Darrin Stevens – 227 Queen Street, Withernsea, Yorkshire Hu19 2HH***

***07956 386 720***