

# ELSIE INGIS 1864 – 1917

Elsie Inglis was born in 1864, in the small Indian town of Naini Tal, before moving back to Scotland with her parents. At the time of her birth, women were not considered equal to men; many parents hoped to have a son rather than a daughter. But Elsie was lucky – her mother and father valued her future and education as much as any boy's. After studying in Paris and Edinburgh, she went on to study medicine and become a qualified surgeon.

Whilst working at hospitals in Scotland, Elsie was shocked to discover how poor the care provided to poorer female patients was. She knew this was not right, so set up a tiny hospital in Edinburgh just for women, often not accepting payment.

Disgusted by what she had seen, Elsie joined the women's suffrage campaign in 1900, and **campaigned** for women's rights all across Scotland, with some success.

In August 1914, the **suffrage** campaign was suspended, with all efforts redirected towards war. But the **prejudices** of Edwardian Britain were hard to break. When Elsie offered to take an all-female medical unit to the front in 1914, the War Office told her: "My good lady, go home and sit still."

But Elsie refused to sit still. She offered help to France, Belgium and Serbia instead – and in November 1914 dispatched the first of 14 all-women medical units to Serbia, to assist the war effort. Her Scottish Women's Hospitals went on to recruit more than 1,500 women – and 20 men – to treat thousands in France, Serbia, Corsica, Salonika, Romania, Russia and Malta.

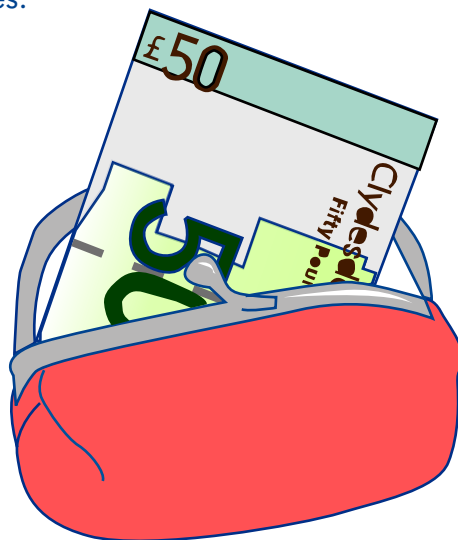
By summer 1916, Elsie knew she was dying of cancer but carried on her work. In November 1917, her illness forced her to leave Russia. She died aged 53 in Newcastle on the journey home. Thousands lined the streets for her funeral in Edinburgh. Elsie is still a hero in Serbia, with streets and buildings named after her. She appears on Clydesdale Bank £50 notes.

Glossary:

**Campaign** – working in an organised way towards a goal

**Suffrage** – the right for women to vote

**Prejudice** – a view or perception of another that is not based on real experience, usually negative



# LOUISA GARRETT ANDERSON AND FLORA MURRAY



Flora Murray was a landowner's daughter, born near Dumfries, Scotland in 1869. After attending school in both Germany and London, she went on to study to be a doctor at Durham University. Once she became a qualified doctor, she moved to London to work at the Belgrave Children's Hospital.

In 1908, as a 39-year-old doctor in London, she went on to become a physician to the militant suffragette group the Women's Social

and Political Union, giving first aid at demonstrations and treating freed hunger strikers.

Louisa Garrett Anderson, daughter of a steamship company owner from Aldeburgh, Suffolk, was born in 1873, eight years after her mother Elizabeth had qualified as Britain's first women doctor. She worked closely with her mother and father on women's rights, campaigning for women to have the right to vote. Some of her activities got her into trouble – she was sent to prison for six months after throwing a brick through an MP's window. All the while, she worked as a doctor at the Royal Free Hospital in London.

When the two women met, their strong views on women's rights and a love of medicine made them close friends. Together, in 1912, they set up a children's hospital staffed solely by women in North West London. Its motto was Deeds Not Words, a slogan used by the suffragettes.

When war came in 1914, Louisa and Flora set up an all-female-run hospital at a hotel in Paris, funded by wealthy sympathisers. Six months later, they were astonished to be offered the chance to establish a similar hospital in London!

The Endell Street Military Hospital, a former workhouse in Covent Garden, opened in May 1915 with 573 beds and an all-female staff body of 180.





Chief surgeon Flora and doctor-in-chief Louisa took their Deeds Not Words slogan with them. Flora told staff:

*You not only have got to do a good job, you have got to do a superior job. What would be accepted from a man will not be accepted from a woman. You've got to do better.*

The work was all-consuming. Endell Street was close to main railway stations and treated many of the most serious cases. Before the war, women doctors did not treat men. The wounded were shocked to see women **stretcher bearers**, let alone a woman surgeon. Louisa said:

*If you have found out the way to treat children – what toys they like, what they like for tea, and what frightens them when going to an operation – you have gone a great way to find out how to run a military hospital.*

The male authorities of the Royal Army Medical Corps predicted Endell Street would fail in six months – it lasted until 1919, treating 26,000 soldiers with 7,000 operations.

Flora and Louisa, both awarded the CBE in 1917, were constant companions after the war. Flora died aged 54 in 1923, Louisa 20 years later aged 70. They are buried together at the church near their home in Penn, Buckinghamshire.

Glossary:

**Militant** – someone favouring violent methods of protest

**Suffragette** – women seeking the right to vote through protesting together

**Demonstration** – a mass group of people coming together to pass on a message (similar to a protest)

**MP** – member of parliament

**Sympathiser** – someone who agrees with a cause or view and may fund it too

**Stretcher bearers** – people who carry wounded people (e.g. from a battlefield or into hospital from an ambulance) on a stretcher

