

In Memory of  
**Frances Ethel Astell**

Territorial Force Nursing Service  
Died 17 December 1917 age 38.



No image  
currently  
available

Remembered with honour:  
The Diocese of Norwich & the Great War 1914-1918 Book of Remembrance  
The Women's National Memorial Screen in York Minster  
Commemorated in perpetuity by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

# The Story of Frances Ethel Astell

Frances, who sometimes called herself Ethel, was born on 9 July 1878 in Handsworth, Staffordshire. Her father Henry was a commercial traveller and it was presumably on his travels that he met Frances' mother Martha who was from Norwich. Frances had a younger sister Jessie who worked as a governess in Norfolk all her life and died unmarried in 1963.

To join the Territorial Force Nursing Service (TFNS) women had to be qualified nurses, be 23 years of age or over and have completed at least three years of training. Frances met all of these criteria with the 1911 census showing that she was working as a nurse in Sheffield.

When Frances first joined the TFNS in 1915 she worked as a sister at the 3rd Northern General Hospital in Sheffield. At the end of 1916 she was certified fit to serve abroad, her hospital reference stating:

*"Miss Astell has served in this hospital since July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1915. She is energetic, a hard worker, a thoroughly good nurse and quite able to train orderlies, but is not very tactful in her methods. I do not consider her fitted for a higher rank than she at present holds."*

Frances left for Salonika, Northern Greece on January 9 1917. Her war records show that she named her mother as next of kin.

Frances was in Salonika for eleven months before she became ill. She was admitted into the 43rd General Hospital in Salonika on 8 November and on 24 November she was reported to be dangerously ill. However on 30 November she was reported to be out of danger. Sadly this recovery was short-lived and she died from 'appendicitis with abscesses' on 17 December 1917 age 38. Frances was buried the following day at the Mikra British Cemetery in Kalamaria, Greece.

Frances' mother Martha was told of her daughter's death in a letter written on 9 January 1918. War records of the deceased often comprised of lengthy correspondence as the family attempted to settle the deceased's affairs and Frances' was no exception.



A letter written on behalf of Martha in April 1918 requested the return of Frances' belongings. A letter written by J Holford, also a sister in the TFNS, stated that she had brought Frances' belongings back as far as Malta where she had then handed them over to the authorities. It is not clear whether they were ever returned to her mother.

Frances left £222 16s 6d in her will to her spinster sister Jessie. Jessie was also left her sister's medals. As Jessie died a spinster, we do not know where these medals are today.