

In Memory of  
**Beris Selina Frances Burton-Fanning**

British Red Cross  
Died 21 October 1916 age 22.



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 Beris Selina Frances Burton-Fanning



Beris was born 1894 in Norwich. Her parents Frederick William Burton-Fanning and Christabel Eleanor Newel Burton-Fanning were well known and highly respected in the city. Frederick was a doctor and Christabel was a key figure in the British Red Cross Society instrumental in helping to set up the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) scheme. With this background Beris grew up helping with her mother's various charitable activities. When war broke out she would work every night helping to receive the convoy of wounded soldiers arriving at Thorpe Station in Norwich.

Beris joined the Red Cross in August 1916. She worked as a VAD nurse in Norwich hospitals before going to work at the 1st Eastern General Hospital in Cambridge where her father was a medical officer. She lodged at Selwyn College Cambridge.

On the night of 21 October 1916 Beris had finished her shift and was sitting by the fire at Selwyn College chatting to a colleague. A spark from the fire caught her dressing gown and set it alight. Beris suffered severe burns and died from shock.

Beris' tragic death and the subsequent inquest was covered extensively in both local and national newspapers. The Diss Express on 27 October 1916 also gave some insight into the young woman that she was:

*"Probably no young lady of her age was better known or more widely respected in Norwich. She loved to work for philanthropic objects, but above all for those tending to the relief of sickness and suffering . . . She had followed in her mother's footsteps by taking an active interest in Red Cross work, and when the war broke out she threw herself into the work as though it was the sole object of her existence . . . How many a tired and war worn soldier was cheered on his way by the bracing effect of her bright and amiable presence! With the most engaging of smiles and the happiest remarks, she would hurry from carriage to carriage, handing out hot drinks and cigarettes."*

In 1919 Beris' parents gave £750 to create the Nurses Aid Fund at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital to support other nurses in Beris' memory. Beris was not the only child they lost to war. Their son Newel (pictured right) died in 1917 and Ralph died in 1943. Only daughter Christabel lived to old age.

Beris was buried on 25 October 1916 at Little Shelford (All Saints) churchyard in Cambridgeshire.



N. E. E. Burton-Fanning.