

In Memory of

Lilian Silver Duffen

Territorial Force Nursing Service

Died 15 March 1926 age 46.



No image
currently
available

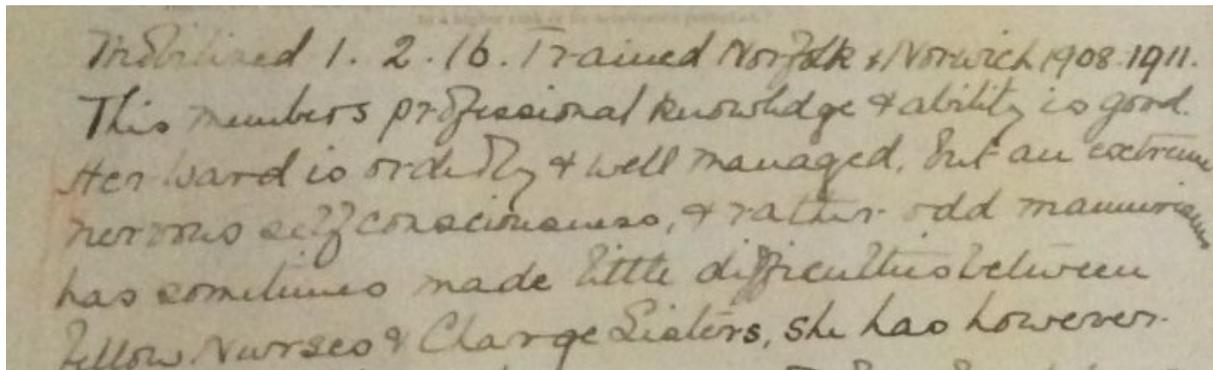
Remembered with honour:

The Diocese of Norwich & the Great War 1914-1918 Book of Remembrance

The Story of Lilian Silver Duffen

Lilian Silver Duffen was born in 1879 in Norwich to Henry and Elizabeth Duffen. Between 1908 and 1911 she trained as a nurse at St Stephen's Hospital (Norfolk and Norwich Hospital) in Norwich.

Lilian, as an experienced nurse over the age of 23, was qualified to join the Territorial Force Nursing Service (TFNS) and joined as a Staff Nurse in February 1916. She served at the 3rd Western General Hospital Neath in Cardiff from 1916 to 1919. Lilian was demobbed in March 1919 but could not settle at home. So in May 1919 she applied for a permanent position in a military hospital abroad. In October 1919 she transferred to the QAIMNS and went to India returning to England in 1922.



An annual nursing report in 1918 gives some indication of her character. Such traits were likely to have contributed to her future illness.

In 1922 Lilian asked to be demobbed complaining not of illness but of extreme fatigue. It would not have been known then that she was, in fact, suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome. Such a diagnosis did not exist at that time, instead she was diagnosed with neurasthenia. Her consultant wrote that "Miss Duffen is still highly neurasthenic, and unable to do any work of any description."

While the 'cure' for neurasthenia was said to be rest, Lilian's health did not improve and in July 1922 she was certified insane. Her records state that her illness was "attributable to military service". Lilian had thought she was only tired.

In May 1924 Lilian was a patient at the Bethel Hospital for the insane in Norwich. At some point she moved to Camberwell House Asylum in Surrey where she died on 15 March 1926. Ann Beadsmore Smith of TFNS wrote that "her death must have been a happy release."

Lilian's war records present a picture of a highly dedicated nurse unable to settle back into the normal routines of life after the war. This led to her committing to more years of service in military hospitals in India where she would have witnessed significant suffering. Despite her "odd mannerisms", other reports praised her nursing abilities. Maud McCarthy, Matron-in-Chief of the TFNS wrote in May 1923 that "Miss L.S. Duffen proved herself to be a most capable and efficient Staff Nurse whose work, general behaviour and health were entirely satisfactory during her service with the Territorial Force Nursing Service".

While Lilian died some years after the war, it is clear that her death was attributable to her service in the TFNS. The women's names for the Norwich Cathedral Roll of Honour were not collected until 1932. This allowed Lilian's name to be remembered.