

In Memory of

# Elsie Margaret Humphrey

Territorial Force Nursing Service

Died 19 April 1920 age 32.



No image  
currently  
available

Remembered with honour:

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

Commemorated in perpetuity by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

# The Story of Elsie Margaret Humphrey

Elsie Margaret Humphrey was born in 1888 to George and Caroline Humphrey, the family lived in Romford, Kent. Elsie was one of four children. Her sister Evelyn died in childhood, but her two brothers Francis and Arthur both trained as engineers and survived the war.

By 1911 Elsie was a qualified nurse working at Addenbrooke's hospital in Cambridge. When war broke out she was eligible, being an experienced nurse over the age of 23, to join the Territorial Force Nursing Service (TFNS). She was immediately transferred from Addenbrooke's to the 1st Eastern General Hospital in Cambridge. Elsie was a capable nurse and her annual reports were highly complementary. In April 1917 she was promoted to Sister.

*"A capable and trustworthy sister, she keeps her ward well, maintains good discipline and takes a keen interest in her patient's welfare."*

In August 1917 Elsie volunteered to work abroad and was sent to the 5th General Hospital in Rouen in September 1918. After the Armistice Elsie stayed on in Rouen. However, in December 1918 she caught influenza and returned to England. She never saw France again.

In January 1919 a medical board declared she could return to the 1st Eastern General Hospital in Cambridge. It was something of a harsh decision and within two weeks she was back on sick leave. She went to stay with relatives in Essex and, while there her condition worsened.

A delayed diagnosis of tuberculosis (TB) and months of being transferred to different hospitals did nothing to aid Elsie's recovery. Elsie spent time at the Sobraon Hospital in Colchester, the Royal Herbert Hospital in Woolwich, the King Edward VII Sanatorium in Midhurst and the Millbank Hospital in London. Her illness was classified as "infection on military service". Despite this she still had to fund part of her sanatorium fees.

It was finally agreed that Elsie could go to her North Hill, Cornwall to be nursed by her close friend Mary Brown who she had met at Addenbrooke's. She was officially discharged from the TFNS on 9 April 1920 as medically unfit.

On 15 April 1920 Mary wrote a letter on Elsie's behalf to Dame Sidney Brown, Matron:

*"She just wants you to know that all the work she did for the Army during the war gave her the greatest pleasure and she wishes she could have done more."*

Elsie died of tuberculosis on 19 April 1920 at Mary Brown's home in North Hill. She was buried at St Torney churchyard, North Hill, Cornwall on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has responsibility for Elsie's gravestone which is not of the usual design.

It is a mystery why Elsie's name appears on Norwich Cathedral's Roll of Honour as neither Elsie or her family appeared to have any connection with Norfolk. Her epitaph reads:

*She fought, prayed and struggled on  
Loving God best  
Then when her work was done  
Lay down to rest.*

