

Commemorating Dr Elsie Inglis in Edinburgh this month

When the First World War began, Dr Elsie Inglis offered to set up a fully equipped medical unit staffed by women for the war front. She was told by the British War Office, “Dear lady, go home and sit still”.

Dr Inglis refused to do that.

Instead, she raised large amounts of money and established the Scottish Women’s Hospital in France and Serbia. She travelled to Romania, Malta and Russia and helped provide medical assistance on the Western Front.

Dr Inglis was born in India in 1864 and brought up in Scotland, studying medicine in Glasgow, Dublin and Edinburgh. She was a pioneer, founding hospitals for poor women, joining the suffragette movement and setting up the war hospitals which were entirely run by women.

In Edinburgh many people were born in the Elsie Inglis

Maternity Hospital which was set up near Holyrood in 1925 to continue the work Dr Inglis had begun in a hospital on the Royal Mile. The building was later converted to a nursing home.

When she died in hospital in Newcastle from cancer, her funeral held was held at St Giles Cathedral with members of the Royal Family in attendance. Her body lay in state at St Giles before the service, and she was buried in Dean Cemetery. Edinburgh's streets were full of hundreds of mourners.



Elsie Inglis grave in Dean Cemetery



Elsie Inglis grave in Dean Cemetery Edinburgh

The Elsie Inglis Tribute Campaign hopes to raise £50,000 for a Royal Mile statue memorialising the pioneering Scottish doctor and suffragist.

The Elsie Inglis Tribute Campaign was set up to make sure that the legacy of her work is never forgotten.

Walking tours are part of the campaign's work, with a goal of raising £50,000 to erect a statue to her memory. It is hoped that the statue will be raised on the Royal Mile.

The Lord Provost's charity, the OneCity Trust is responsible for collecting donations on their [website](#), or you can email elaine@onecitytrust.com for details on how to contribute.



At The City of Edinburgh Council meeting on 28 October 2021, councillors voted to accept the Lord Provost's Motion to support the fundraising campaign. This is what they agreed:

“Council: Recognises that Dr Elsie Inglis (1864 – 1917) was a pioneering Scottish doctor and surgeon becoming the founder of Women's medical practices and hospitals located within the

City of Edinburgh.

“Further recognises her work and achievements during the World War I, becoming a Suffragist and founder of the Scottish Women’s Hospitals for Foreign Service, sending qualified teams of female nurses to Belgium, France, Serbia and Russia.

“Notes that the Lord Provost, Mercat Tours and the Edinburgh Evening News upon the Centennial anniversary of Elsie’s death on 26 November 2017 began a fundraising campaign to honour her life and recognise her work in the city and abroad by commemorating her with a statue.

“Further notes that:

- . *our Capital city has more statues of animals than women;*
- . *Elsie Inglis was a woman of character, who inspired others with her determination and pioneering work during inauspicious times;*
- . *Elsie’s values mirror those of the **Edinburgh 2050 City Vision of ‘Thriving, Welcoming, Fair and Pioneering’** which resulted from the Councils largest consultation with the Citizens of Edinburgh in 2019;*
- . *to date £2,400 has been raised, and,*
- . *in the past few months the campaign has been rejuvenated with the support of a group of dedicated and passionate volunteers, along with Girl Guiding Edinburgh. Welcomes the support from all parties involved and commend them for their fundraising efforts planned for March 2022, which includes the Girl Guiding sponsored ‘Sit Still’ in the Meadows and various afternoon teas being held at the City Chambers and the Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh.*

“Council agrees to give full and unequivocal support to all of these activities to raise funds, enabling the life and work of Dr Elsie Inglis to be commemorated in the form of a statue; to be bequeathed to the citizens of Edinburgh.”

FUNDRAISING EVENTS

There will be many events to help the fundraising effort including beginning with the first Sit Still which is being spearheaded by GirlGuiding Scotland. On Saturday, 5 March, Girlguiding Edinburgh kicks off the week of 'Sit Still' fundraising events for Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Rangers, and leaders at The Meadows. Dr Elsie Inglis didn't sit still, and neither will the members of GirlGuiding Edinburgh. The members are told to expect a range of activities, including UMAs and Skills Builder badges for all sections.



A spokesperson for GirlGuiding Edinburgh said: "Bring your units along to find out more about the remarkable woman, Dr Elsie Inglis, and how her ideals are still very relevant today. An Elsie Inglis activity pack—designed by Edinburgh Brownies and Guides—and badge is available for all sections, as well as further details on running a 'Sit Still' fundraising event for your unit or family and friends.

Everyone is encouraged to organise a fundraising event of

their own. A Sit Still can be big or small – a lunch, afternoon tea, two minutes or two hours. The Elsie Inglis campaign explains: “We will prepare kits to send out with advice. Just make sure that you think about Elsie Inglis NOT sitting still and about the huge difference she made in so many different areas.”

Other fundraising events include:

- 7 and 8 March St Giles Cathedral Exhibition and Sit Still – “a rare opportunity to see the Cathedral’s own memorabilia along with a remarkable collection of SWH medals. You will be invited to Sit Still for 15 minutes beside the famous wall memorial plaque to Elsie Inglis, the Scottish Women’s Hospital nurses and doctors, situated in the Holy Cross Aisle, in the place where her funeral service was held on 29 November 1917. It was attended by royalty and dignitaries before her coffin travelled through mourning Edinburgh crowds filling the streets and showing their respect as her cortege made its way to her final resting place in The Dean Cemetery.”
- 7 March An evening with Alastair Bruce, OBE, VR DL, Governor of Edinburgh Castle who will take you behind the scenes at Downton. Major General Bruce is a historical adviser on the series – and a SKY TV presenter, often commenting on Royal events.
- 8 March International Women’s Day – an evening event hosted by Consul General Mrs Laurence Pais at the French Institute joined by speakers, Jenni Minto MSP a First World War historian who chaired WW100 on Islay. She will speak about women who make history. Ros Taylor writer and broadcaster will talk about Empowering Women. Archival film footage of the Scottish Women’s Hospitals and Dr Elsie Inglis will be shown in the Institute’s cinema.

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/onecitytrust/641254>

- 10 March – Edinburgh Gin will celebrate Dr Elsie Inglis explaining Edinburgh’s place in the story of gin and that it formed part of a nurse’s kit playing its part during the First World War.
- 11 March – Where are the women? Afternoon tea at 3pm at the City Chambers with Sara Sheridan author of Where are the women? talking about an imaginary Scotland where women are properly commemorated in statues, on streets and in buildings. Also Kate Murray-Brown editor and author of The Upstairs Room who will talk about her great great aunt – Dr Elsie Inglis.
<https://www.elsieinglis.org/events>
- 12 March Afternoon tea at the City Chambers with Dr Iram Qureshi award-winning British Film & TV Producer, Director, Associate Lecturer at the University of Bath and Assistant Examiner at the University of Cambridge. Dr Qureshi will talk about producing her film about the work of Elsie Inglis and the Scottish Women’s hospital in the “[THE WOMAN WITH THE TORCH – ELSIE INGLIS’ WAR](#)” and Ailsa Clarke whose interest in WW1 was sparked as a 16-year-old on her high school battlefield trip. As an adult, she went on to become a tour guide on the Western Front before going into secondary school teaching. She is also a historical enactor, specialising in portraying women on active service during WW1.
- 13 March An afternoon with Professor Linda Bauld, OBE, and Kate Murray-Brown. Enjoy a coffee while listening to both speaking – Professor Bauld is Chief Social Policy Advisor to the Scottish Government and “one of the reassuring voices of the pandemic” and a “go to pandemic pundit”.
- 13 March – Fundraising Gala Dinner at Dine for a finale to the fundraising week. Beginning with a fizz reception and including a three course dinner – sadly tickets are already sold out but you can join the waiting list.

More details here <https://www.elsieinglis.org/> or the

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/344124250755533>

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/elsie-inglis-walking-tour-fundraising-event-tickets-265033591607?fbclid=IwAR3uiy7i5JU_rNsXSeB5dIh5cha0tuE8MY_fF96f_nLB6r0MxtgoJKMQNeU



Geraldine Inglis Agar great-great niece of Dr Inglis at the Pages of the Sea event at St Andrews in 2018 when Dr Elsie Inglis was depicted in the sand.