



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## 10 Scottish Women's Hospital Women

Over 1,500 women worked in the Scottish Women's Hospitals units across Europe during the First World War.

Here we have highlighted ten different women who worked for the Scottish Women's Hospitals to give an idea of their stories, the wide range of backgrounds that they came from and their roles within the hospital units.

Thanks to: Dr Yvonne McEwen, Historian, University of Edinburgh



*Dr Ivens and the doctors at Royaumont. ©Glasgow City Council: Archive*





The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# 1. Elsie Maud Inglis

## **Role: Doctor**

Founder of the Scottish Women's Hospitals, Dr Inglis was born in India in 1864 where her father worked for the East India Company.

One of the first qualified female doctors, she trained in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dublin and worked to improve the care of women and children in some of the poorest areas of Edinburgh.

Dr Inglis led on setting up the SWH units across Europe working as a doctor and surgeon. As founder of the organisation she also started the fundraising efforts.

She gave public talks in communities across the UK to tell people about the desperate need for medical and nursing staff in the war zones and explained the work of the doctors, nurses and staff of the SWH units. She negotiated with allied military medical personnel in setting up the hospitals in their countries and in the beginning, dealt with much of the administration of the hospital units.

Many people in Edinburgh still associate Dr Inglis with the maternity hospital which was later named after her in the city. She died in Newcastle in 1917.







The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## 2. Katherine S MacPhail

### **Role: Doctor**

Originally from Coatbridge, near Glasgow, Dr MacPhail was from a relatively well-off family; her father was also a doctor. She studied medicine at the University of Glasgow and qualified in 1911. After travelling to Serbia with the 1st Serbian Unit as a junior doctor she then worked in the units in France and Corsica.

Dr MacPhail contracted typhus during her war hospital work but survived. However this caused her health complications later in life. She set up the first children's hospital in Serbia and stayed on in Belgrade to work after the war where she is still remembered. She retired to St Andrews in 1947 and died in 1974.



*Photographer: Ariel Vargas*  
©IWM (Imperial War Museum)





The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

### 3. Evelina Haverfield

**Role: Administrator**

Born in 1867 at Inverlochy Castle, Kingussie, Evelina was a daughter of the 3rd Baron Abinger.

A key campaigner for women's rights she was involved in the suffragette movement with Emmeline Parkhurst.

Known for her strong personality and skill as a horse rider she rode in front of some suffragette demonstrations to rally support and was arrested several times during campaign marches.

As an administrator for one of the SWH units, she was responsible for the smooth running of the hospital, organising the staffing and supplies as well as liaising with the local officials in France and Serbia.

At the end of the war, Evelina, along with Vera Holme, another key member of the SWH, set up an orphanage in Serbia for children made homeless as a result of the war. She died of pneumonia in 1920 aged 57 and is buried in Serbia.



*Photographer: Beatrice Cundy*  
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The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## 4. Vera L Holme

### **Role: Driver**

Vera was born in Lancashire in 1881 and was sent to school in Belgium as a young girl. Later she was based in London and worked as an actress for various touring theatre companies. She led quite an unconventional life for a woman of the time. After joining the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) she became active in the women's suffrage movement, working as a chauffeur for the Parkhursts, leaders of the movement.

Her driving experience meant she was ideal for work within the SWH transport units in Serbia and Russia, becoming responsible for ambulances and other vehicles.

On return visits to the UK she gave lectures about the work of the SWH to help raise funds. After the end of the war she continued to be involved in relief work in Serbia including working as fund administrator for the orphanage set up by Evelina Haverfield. She died in Scotland in 1969.





The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## 5. Madge Neil Fraser

### **Role: Orderly**

Madge was well known in Scotland before the First World War as Captain of the Scottish Ladies golf team. She was a member of the St Andrew's Ambulance Association and qualified in first aid and nursing. In 1914, she volunteered to join the SWH as an orderly and travelled to Serbia.

Her time there was short lived however. Along with two SWH colleagues, she died in Serbia in 1915 during the typhus epidemic that swept the country. Her brother Patrick, a soldier in the Border Regiment, was killed the following year on the first day of the battle of the Somme.

Her portrait is in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery in London.





The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## 6. Ishobel Ross

### **Role: Cook**

Born in 1890 on the Isle of Skye, Ishobel trained as a cookery teacher in Edinburgh.

While teaching at a girl's school in the city, she heard Dr Inglis talking about the Scottish Women's Hospitals at a public meeting in Edinburgh and decided to volunteer to join up as a cook in 1916.

Ishobel kept a diary of her journey to Serbia by sea on the Dunluce Castle hospital ship and recorded day to day life working at the Serbian front.

The hospital cooks worked with very basic equipment including wood burning stoves to feed hundreds of patients and staff, sometimes working in the open air or in makeshift cookhouses.

The kitchen often became a focal point for visitors to the hospitals, such as allied officers passing through the local area. Her diary lay undiscovered until her death in 1965 when it was found by her family and later published.





The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## 7. Alice Hutchison

### **Role: Doctor**

Dr Hutchison graduated in 1903 in Edinburgh and was one of the first doctors to join the SWH. She had been the doctor in charge of the St John Street Dispensary, Canongate Edinburgh, which provided free medical care for the poor.

Having served during an Indian cholera epidemic and in a women's unit in Bulgaria during the First Balkan War, Dr Hutchison was one of the SWH medical staff with previous war hospital experience.

She travelled to Calais in November 1914 and became Chief Medical Officer in charge of a typhoid annexe attending to the Belgium sick and wounded in a school building, one of the first SWH hospitals.

After leaving Calais she worked in Malta and then Valjevo, Serbia and later in the SWH unit in Corsica. When the war was over, she returned to England and worked in hospitals in London. Dr Hutchison died in 1953 aged 79.





The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## 8. Frances Ivens

### **Role: Doctor**

Born in 1870 in Warwickshire, Dr Ivens graduated in 1902 in medicine and surgery from the Royal Free Hospital's Medical School for Women. She completed additional training in Dublin and Vienna. In 1907 she was appointed the first female consultant in Liverpool.

Dr Ivens was the Chief Medical Officer at the Abbaye de Royaumont SWH hospital near Paris. She worked with the SWH staff sent there to set up the hospital from scratch, clearing the building of rubbish before being able to set up the wards and operating theatre. Dr Ivens is depicted in the Norah Neilson-Gray painting of the hospital at Royaumont.

She received the Croix de Guerre and Legion d'Honneur from the French government and returned to work as a doctor in Liverpool after the war. She died in 1944.



©Glasgow City Council: Archive





The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## 9. Isabel Emslie

### **Role: Doctor**

Born in 1887 Dr Emslie was a student of the Women's Medical School at Edinburgh University. She graduated in 1910 and specialised in psychiatry. She joined the SWH in 1915 and travelled to France with her unit to set up the tented hospital at Troyes.

She was appointed Chief Medical Officer (CMO) of the SWH unit in Ostrovo, Greece and later moved with this unit to Vranja in Serbia where her hospital remained until 1919 working to set up local hospitals in Serbia after the war, before the SWH units closed.

Dr Emslie then worked as CMO at a hospital in Sebastopol before the Russian Civil War broke out.

She went on to work during the Second World War as Director of the Indian Red Cross Welfare Service. She died in 1959.



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The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## 10. Louisa Jessie Jordan

### **Role: Nursing Sister**

Originally from Glasgow, Sister Jordan had diverse nursing experience over several years in the UK before joining up with the SWH. She had worked at the Shotts Fever Hospital in Lanarkshire and at the poor law hospital in Manchester. During the typhus epidemic in Serbia in 1915 she was in charge of a new fever ward at the SWH unit in Kragujevac.

Large numbers of Serbian doctors, nurses and patients had by then died of the disease. Dr Elizabeth Ross of the SWH fell ill with typhus and was nursed by Sister Jordan and one of her colleagues. She kept a diary during this time and recorded that 'hardly a day passes but there is one or two funerals here'. She died from typhus a few days later aged 36.

Over 150,000 people died during the Serbian typhus epidemic of 1914-15. Typhus is an infectious disease which is transmitted by insects such as body lice and fleas and historically caused high numbers of fatalities during wars and famines.