

## Edith Cavell Fact Sheet



Edith Cavell (1865-1915) was a British nurse working in Belgium who was executed by the Germans on a charge of assisting British and French prisoners to escape during the First World War.

Born on 4 December 1865 in Norfolk, Cavell started nursing aged 20. After many nursing jobs Cavell moved to Belgium and was appointed matron of the Berkendael Medical Institute in 1907.

At the start of the First World War in 1914 and the following German occupation of Belgium, Cavell joined the Red Cross supporting the nursing effort and the The Berkendael Institute, where Cavell was matron, was converted into a hospital for wounded soldiers of all nationalities. Soldiers who were treated at Berkendael afterwards succeeded in escaping with Cavell's active assistance to neutral Holland. After being betrayed, Cavell was arrested on 5 August 1915 by local German authorities and charged with personally aiding the escape of some 200 soldiers.

Once arrested, Cavell was kept in solitary confinement for nine weeks where the German forces successfully took a confession from Cavell which formed the basis of her trial. Cavell along with a named Belgian accomplice Philippe Baucq, were pronounced guilty and sentenced to death by German firing squad.

The sentence was carried out on 12 October 1915 without reference to the German high command. Cavell's case received significant sympathetic worldwide press coverage and propaganda, most notably in Britain and the then-neutral United States. News of Cavell's murder was used as propaganda to support the war effort. In the weeks after Cavell's death the number of young men enlisting to serve in the First World War significantly increased.

Cavell, was buried at Norwich Cathedral and is commemorated in a statue near Trafalgar Square in London.