

Elsie Inglis: The Trailblazing Doctor Who Changed History



LANGUAGE LEARNING

The Scottish English Podcast – Episode 15

Transcript & Upper-intermediate and Advanced Vocabulary Guide

Transcript

She defied the British Army, ran hospitals on the front line of war and saved the lives of thousands of soldiers, all while fighting for women's rights in a man's world. She wasn't just a doctor, she was a revolutionary, and that's why I've included her in this short series of Scotland's innovators and inventors. Her name? Elsie Inglis.

Hello and welcome to the Scottish English Podcast, the show where you can improve your English while learning all about Scotland's fascinating history and present.

I'm Claire and today we are shining a light on an extraordinary Scottish woman whose courage and compassion changed the course of history. And remember, if you'd like to follow along more easily, you can download the free transcript of this episode. It is in the show notes and includes vocabulary and helpful expressions. Also do subscribe and hit that notification bell so that you know when the next episode of the Scottish English Podcast comes out.

Her name was Elsie Inglis, a trailblazing doctor, a fearless suffragist and a war hero who refused to be told to go home and sit still.

Let's find out how she saved thousands of lives and left a legacy of courage, compassion, and defiance.

Early life and education.

Elsie Inglis was born in India in 1864 to Scottish parents, but was raised and educated in Edinburgh. From a young age, she was determined, intelligent, and deeply compassionate.

At a time when very few women were allowed to study medicine, Elsie didn't let anything stop her.

She trained as a doctor in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and later went on to establish a medical college specifically for women. Her goal wasn't just to practice medicine, but to make it accessible for women, both as doctors and as patients.

Fighting for women's rights.

Inglis wasn't just a brilliant doctor. She was also a passionate suffragist. Someone who fights for women's right to vote.

She believed that women deserved a voice in public life and in healthcare too.

She opened a maternity hospital in Edinburgh, which focused on treating poor women with dignity, offering care that was often denied to them elsewhere.

For Elsie medicine and social justice went hand in hand.

Elsie's role in World War I.

When World War I broke out in 1914, Elsie Inglis wanted to help. She offered her services to the British War office, but they turned her down. In fact, they told her, "My good lady, go home and sit still."

But that was the worst piece of advice they could have given her.

Instead of sitting still, Elsie founded the Scottish Women's Hospital for Foreign Service, a network of all female medical units that served on the front lines.

These hospitals treated soldiers in France, Serbia, Russia, and beyond. They were efficient, courageous, and incredibly effective.

Elsie herself worked in some of the most dangerous war zones, including Serbia, where she was captured and held as a prisoner of war.

After her release, she didn't stop. Even while ill with cancer, she led another mission to Russia.

A lasting legacy.

Elsie Inglis died in 1917, shortly after returning to Britain. At her funeral, military honours were given and tributes poured in from across Europe. Serbia in particular, mourned her deeply. Many called her "their mother", a true heroine.

But her legacy didn't end there. The Scottish Women's Hospitals continued to run until the end of the war and today she's remembered not just as a doctor, but as a symbol of what one person can achieve with courage, compassion, and determination.

Elsie Inglis wasn't just someone who followed the rules, she rewrote them. She challenged a system that tried to silence her, and instead, she used her voice and her skills to save lives, fight injustice, and change the world.

That's all for today's episode of the Scottish English Podcast. If you enjoyed today's story, please subscribe and leave us a comment. What did you learn today?

And don't forget, you can download the free transcript from the show notes.

Thanks for listening. See you later.

Advanced Vocabulary & Expressions Guide

Word / Phrase	Definition (British English)	Pronunciation	Useful Collocations & Idiomatic Usage
defy	Openly resist or refuse to obey	/dɪˈfaɪ/	defy authority, defy expectations, defy convention
front line	The most advanced or important position in a conflict or activity	/frʌnt laɪn/	on the front line, front-line staff, front-line services
revolutionary	Involving or causing a complete or dramatic change	/ˌrevəˈluːʃənəri/	revolutionary idea, revolutionary change, revolutionary spirit
innovator	A person who introduces new methods, ideas, or products	/ˈɪnəveɪtə/	technological innovator, leading innovator

shining a light on	To highlight or bring attention to something important	/ˈʃaɪnɪŋ ə laɪt ɒn/	shine a light on an issue, shine a spotlight on
extraordinary	Very unusual or remarkable	/ɪk'strɔːdnri/	extraordinary achievement, extraordinary talent
courage	The ability to do something that frightens one; bravery	/ˈkʌrɪdʒ/	show courage, summon courage, moral courage
compassion	Sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others	/kəm'pæʃən/	show compassion, act with compassion, compassion fatigue
trailblazing	Introducing new ideas or methods; innovative	/ˈtreɪlˌbleɪzɪŋ/	trailblazing work, trailblazing leader
suffragist	A person advocating for the extension of voting rights, especially to women	/ˈsʌfrədʒɪst/	leading suffragist, suffragist movement
legacy	Something handed down by a predecessor	/ˈlegəsi/	lasting legacy, leave a legacy, cultural legacy
defiance	Open resistance; bold disobedience	/dɪ'faɪəns/	act of defiance, show defiance, defiance of authority
determined	Having made a firm decision and being resolved not to change it	/dɪ'tɜːmɪnd/	highly determined, determined effort
compassionate	Feeling or showing sympathy and concern for others	/kəm'pæʃənət/	compassionate care, compassionate approach
establish	Set up (an organisation, system, or set of rules) on a firm or permanent basis	/ɪ'stæblɪʃ/	establish a college, establish a reputation

accessible	Easy to approach, reach, or enter	/ək'sesəbl/	accessible to all, make accessible, accessible information
passionate	Having, showing, or caused by strong feelings or beliefs	/'pæʃənət/	passionate advocate, passionate supporter
dignity	The state or quality of being worthy of honour or respect	/'dɪgnɪti/	treat with dignity, dignity and respect
hand in hand	Closely associated or connected	/hænd ɪn hænd/	go hand in hand, work hand in hand
turned her down	Refused her request or offer	/tɜːnd hæ daʊn/	turn down an offer, be turned down
piece of advice	A suggestion or recommendation about what someone should do	/piːs əv əd'vaɪs/	give a piece of advice, useful piece of advice
founded	Established or set up (an organisation)	/'faʊndɪd/	founded an organisation, company founded in
efficient	Achieving maximum productivity with minimum wasted effort or expense	/'ɪfɪjənt/	highly efficient, energy efficient
effective	Successful in producing a desired or intended result	/'ɪfektɪv/	highly effective, effective strategy
war zones	Areas where armed conflict is taking place	/wɔː zəʊnz/	active war zone, enter a war zone
prisoner of war	A person who has been captured and imprisoned by the enemy in war	/'prɪzənər əv wɔː/	held as a prisoner of war, prisoner of war camp
tributes poured in	Many people expressed their admiration or respect	/'trɪbjʊːts pɔːd ɪn/	tributes pour in, pay tribute to

heroine	A woman admired for her courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities	/ˈhɛrəʊɪn/	national heroine, unsung heroine
symbol	A thing that represents or stands for something else	/ˈsɪmbəl/	symbol of hope, become a symbol
determination	Firmness of purpose; resoluteness	/dɪˈtɜːmɪˈneɪʃən/	show determination, display determination
rewrote the rules	Changed the accepted way of doing things	/ˌriːˈrəʊt ðə ruːlz/	rewrite the rules, rewrite history
challenged a system	Questioned or opposed an established way of doing things	/ˈtʃælɪndʒd ə ˈsɪstəm/	challenge the system, challenge authority
fight injustice	Oppose unfairness or inequality	/faɪt ɪnˈdʒʌstɪs/	fight against injustice, stand up to injustice

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