

# Nursing Sister Rena Maud McLean

Infographic by: Akayla Franklin, Connor Roy, Fatima Cissé



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Born on June 14th, 1880
- Daughter of Senator John McLean and Matilda McLean
- From Souris, Prince Edward Island.
- McLean was a devoted trained nursing sister.

## ENLISTMENT

- Age at enlistment: 34
- Date of enlistment: September 28th 1914
- Rank: Nursing Sister
- Medical issues: No, declared fit.
- Siblings: Mary, Harry and Winnifred McLean
- Married: No
- Service: Canadian Expeditionary Force Nursing Sister for the Canadian Army Medical Corps
- Height: 5 ft 3'
- Eye Colour: Hazel
- Complexion: Blonde
- Religious Affiliation: Presbyterian
- Race: White
- Identifying marks: small mole on back right side of neck, small scar on border of right hand inner border of hand

Date	From whom received	Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, etc., during active service. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place	Date	REMARKS Taken from Official D
187/16	RMS	Returned from transport duty		27/7/16	B.O. 1350.
207/16	D. G. H. H.	taken on strength	D. G. H. H.	24-7-16	P. 11. 209
29-8-16	S. O. S.	overseas for duty with	11th C. Det. H.	29-8-16	P. 11. 209
29-8-16	S. O. S.	overseas for duty with	11th C. Det. H.	29-8-16	P. 11. 209
12-11-16	1 St. C. H.	taken on strength	1 C. St. C. H.	6-10-16	P. 11. 209
2-10-17	2nd Lt.	Placed on transport duty		2-10-17	P. 11. 209
2-9-17	1 St. C. H.	Placed on transport duty		2-9-17	P. 11. 209
13-11-17	RMS	Posted to No. 16 Canadian Hospital	Birmingham	9-11-17	P. 11. 209
5-2-18	do	Posted to H.M.H.S. 'Llandoverly Castle'		5-2-18	P. 11. 209
14-3-18	do	Posted to 16th C. H. A. P.		14-3-18	P. 11. 209
25-3-18	do	Posted to H.M.H.S. 'Llandoverly Castle'		25-3-18	P. 11. 209
6-7-18	RMS	Missing believed drowned		24.6.18	P. 11. 209
4-3-19	do	Previously reported missing believed drowned now for official purposes presumed to have died on or since 24.6.18.		24.6.18	P. 11. 209

McLean's Casualty Form "Previously reported missing believed drowned ... Presumed to have died on or since 24.6.18."



McLean listed amongst other nurses who perished on the 27th

## DEATH

H.M.H.S. 'Llandoverly Castle', which belonged to the Canadian Forces, was commissioned as a hospital ship on 26 July 1916; holding 622 beds and 102 medical staff. On the 27th of June 1918, while going from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Liverpool, England, the ship was attacked without warning by a German submarine 118 miles southwest of Fastnet Rock, off Ireland's coast; the ship displayed a brightly illuminated Red Cross sign so could not have been mistaken for anything other than a hospital ship. The ship sank within 10 minutes. Although the ship was not carrying any patients, 234 people died, 88 of them being medical staff which included Nursing Sister Rena McLean.

### Grave Site:

The Halifax Memorial in Nova Scotia's capital, erected in Point Pleasant Park



The Halifax Memorial in Nova Scotia's capital, erected in Point Pleasant Park, is one of the few tangible reminders of the men and women who died at sea. The cross is mounted on a large podium bearing 23 bronze panels upon which are inscribed the names of over 3,000 Canadian men and women who were buried at sea.

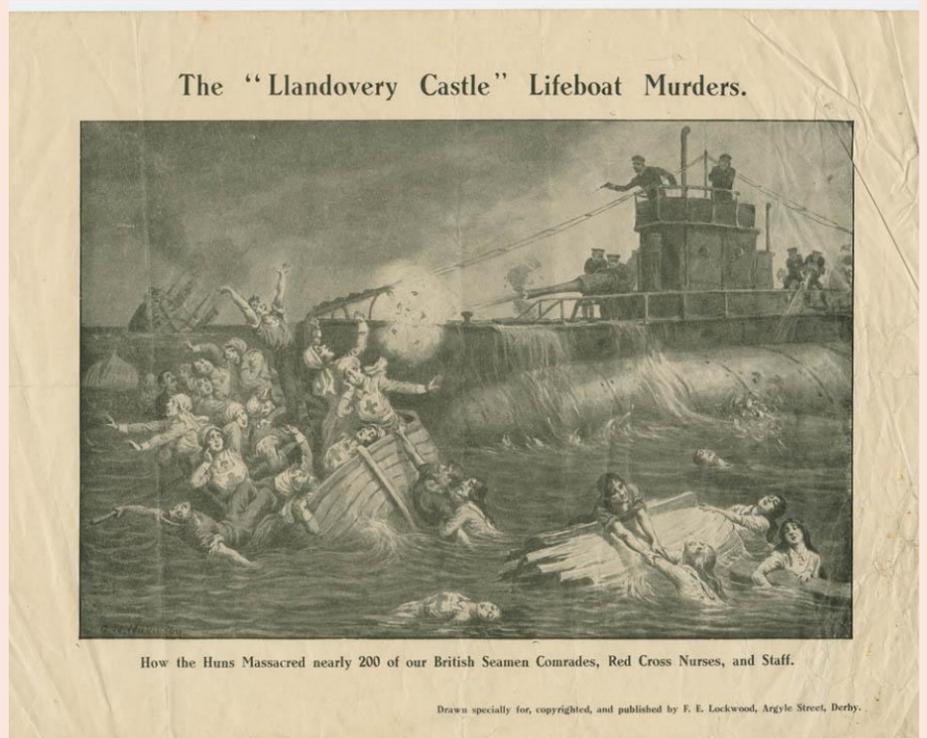
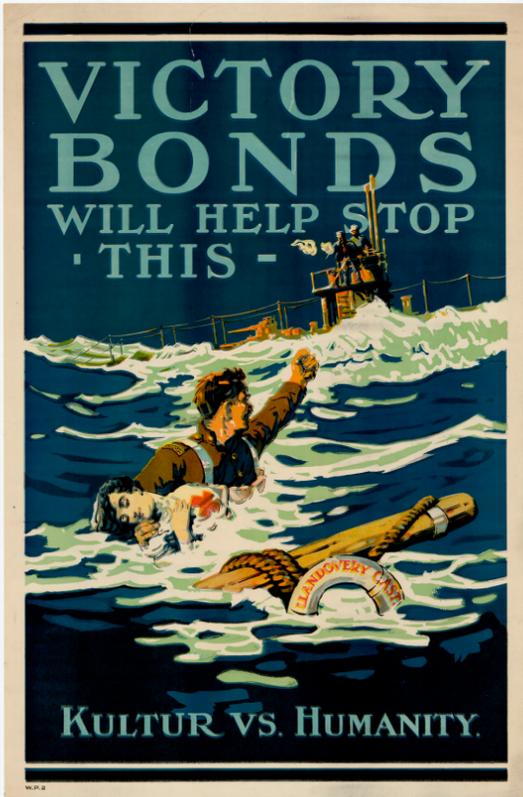
## HOSPITAL SHIP LLANDOVERY CASTLE

On the evening of 27 June 1918, while sailing from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Liverpool, England, the Canadian hospital ship *Llandoverly Castle* was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-boat. Of the 258 crew and passengers, only 24 survived. Almost all the Canadian Army Medical Corps personnel were killed: six male officers, 64 enlisted men and 14 nursing sisters. Only one lifeboat escaped; the rest were either sucked under as the ship sank or attacked by the U-boat. The submarine's officers were later charged with committing a war crime (Deveau, 2021, para. 1).



## THE PUBLIC REACTION

The sinking of HMHS *Llandoverly Castle* was the deadliest Canadian naval disaster during the First World War. The fate of the crew, particularly the nursing sisters, angered the public and became a rallying call. The Allies capitalized on the horrific event and created posters and illustrations that featured dying nursing sisters in the sea, targeted by U-boat machine gunners. (Deveau, 2021, para. 5)



## Rena's Last Letter

"Here we are once more approaching Halifax, but still as far from home as ever. . . . This trip more than half our patients are amputation cases and would make you heartsick only they are so cheerful and happy themselves. . . . This may be my last trip over and, if it is, that means that I don't get home until dear knows when, for as soon as I get to England I am going to put in for France and once there it will be hard enough to get away."

# TIMELINE

## PRE-WAR

### 1891

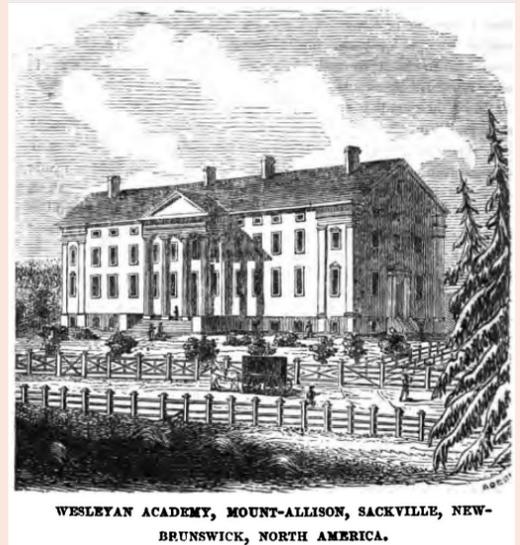
- Attended Mount Allison Ladies' College at age 11.

### 1908

- Graduated from Newport Hospital Training School for Nurses at age 28.

### 1914

- McLean was the head nurse at the Henry Haywood Memorial Hospital in Gardner, Massachusetts when the war began.



## DURING THE WAR

### 1914

- On September 28, McLean was medically cleared and enlisted in the war. The next day, McLean left Valcartier, departed on board H.M.T. Scotian, Sailed from Quebec.
- McLean started her journey with the No. 2 Canadian Station Hospital.
- On October 14, she arrived in Plymouth. A week later on October 21 McLean left Plymouth; enroute to Lavington from North Road Station.
- For the rest of the year McLean travelled/posted at West Down North Camp Area, located in Salisbury Plain, Amesbury, Southampton, and Havre, France.
- At the beginning of November McLean proceeded to No. 1 Rest Camp.

### 1915

- McLean served briefly with No.12 British Stationary Hospital at Rouen and then joined the Duchess of Connaught's Canadian Red Cross Hospital in Taplow, England.

### 1916

- Returned to Canada on June 8, she was assigned to transport duty for one month.
- She returned to Taplow in July and stayed there until November, at which time she was transferred to Salonica, Greece, in October 1916 for service with No.1 Canadian Stationary Hospital.
- June 1916 she was awarded the Royal Red Cross Second Class one of the highest honours awarded to nurses during the Great War.

### 1917

- There was controversy in Britain over nurses having been sent to the Mediterranean and all had to depart in 1917.
- McLean returned to England on August 17, McLean then joined No.16 Canadian General Hospital in Orpington (London).
- February 1918 McLean undertook transport duty again aboard the Araguaya.
- A month later in March McLean was reassigned back to No.16 General Hospital.

### 1918

- In March McLean was posted to the Llandoverly Castle, which carried wounded Canadian soldiers back to Halifax.
- She died on the voyage back to England when the vessel was torpedoed and sunk by the enemy off the coast of Ireland on June 27.
- Memorial service was held at St. James Church in Souris on July 14.



# Life as a Nurse During WW1



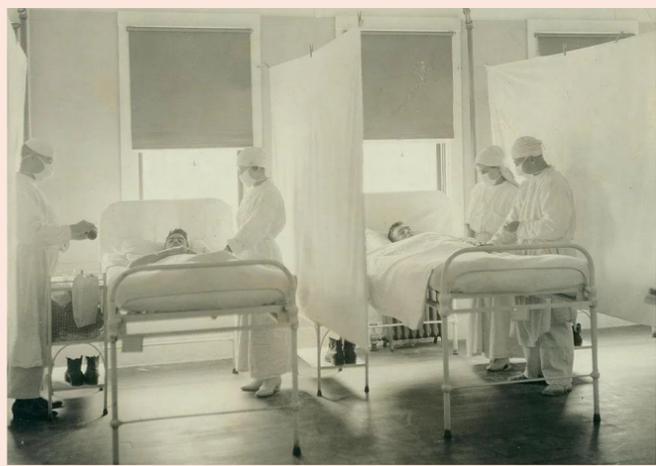
The lives of nursing sisters were filled with the rigorous duties that come with being in a military hospital. They were relied upon to tend to the wounded soldiers who came from the front lines of fighting with all manners of injuries. Victims suffering from mustard gas, missing limbs, and gunshot wounds were all too common.



According to the Canadian War Museum, "soldiers often perceived nurses as 'angels of mercy.'" But being so close to the combat theatre came at a cost. Despite being non-combatants, sometimes the medical personnel would be attacked by enemy bombs and artillery. Sadly, No. 3 Canadian Stationary Hospital was attacked by Germans in May of 1918. Three nurses, and "29 patients and hospital personnel were killed." (Canadian History Workshop, 2014, para. 1).

No. 3 Canadian Stationary Hospital at Doullens Painted in 1918 by Gerald Moira

## Influenza and the Spanish flu Epidemic



During the latter half of the war, a deadly epidemic was emerging onto the scene and was causing concern amongst field hospital staff who had noticed the trend in infected soldiers.

"As American soldiers mobilized for war in the spring of 1918, a handful of army physicians began noticing a worrisome influenza moving among their soldiers. Often resulting in a deadly pneumonia, it struck down previously healthy young men, sometimes with surprising rapidity. Post-mortem exams revealed soggy lungs with evidence of hemorrhaging. Beyond these limited military observations, though, few in the United States noticed that the first wave of a deadly influenza pandemic was underway." (Bristow, para. 1). The service of these women was invaluable, and unbeknownst to many, their sacrifices made often ended up being their lives.

A number of wounded Australians admitted. Quite an epidemic of Influenza is prevalent. Several M.Os and Sisters and personnel are laid up. Raid warning, but nothing came of it. Quiet day.

War diary from No.2 stationary hospital, June 1918, p.3

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