

# The Life of Nursing Sister

## Margaret "Daisy" Jane Fortescue

1878-1918

### Early Life/Pre-War

1878-1914



#### FAMILY

Margaret (nicknamed "Daisy") was the youngest daughter of Joseph and Sarah Jane Fortescue (née Mason), and the sister of Mathew and Gertrude Fortescue. Her father was a Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company. Her mother's father was the Reverend Mason from Northumberland, and her grandfather, Matthew Fortescue, was County Court Judge of Totnes, Devon.

Her family was a part of the Church of England.

**Gertrude Fortescue:** 397 Mountain Street, Montreal, QC

**Mathew Fortescue:** 56 Grosvenor Road, Rathgis, Dublin, Ireland



#### EDUCATION

On April 5th, 1891 at age 13, Margaret went to school at Miss Susan Parrott's, High Class Ladies School in England, where her uncle, Matthew Fortescue was a County Court Judge in Totnes.

#### HOME LIFE

Margaret was born on July 23rd, 1878 in York Factory, MB. Canada. She spent many of her years in grade school in England. Her last known address was 397 Mountain Street, Montreal QC., indicating that she last lived with her sister Gertrude.



Aerial View of York Factory, 1925.

#### FAST FACT

Margaret's father was a Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company. Her mother's father (her grandfather) was the Reverend Mason from Northumberland.

### 1914-1915

### Enlistment



Colourized photo of Nursing Sisters in Uniform

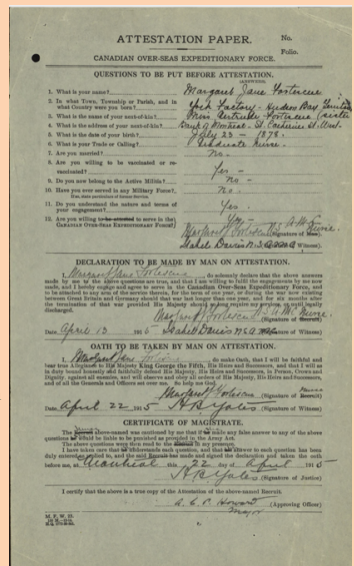
#### FAST FACT

She came from a stable, well-known family as her father was Chief Factor for the Hudson's Bay Company

#### ENLISTMENT

Prior to graduating the Montreal General Hospital School of Nursing, Margaret enlisted on April 22nd, 1915.

#### ATTESTATION PAPERS



#### PERSONAL INFORMATION

Margaret was a single 36 year old when she enlisted. She was 5ft 3.75in with a fair complexion, brown eyes and brown hair. The only distinctive mark on Margaret was a scar following an appendectomy.

### 1915-1918

### During the War

#### WORK PLACEMENTS

Margaret served the Canadian Expeditionary Force as a Nursing Sister in France and Flanders from May 18th 1915.

**July 20th, 1915:** 1st Canadian General Hospital

**March 17th, 1918:** 3rd Canadian General Hospital

**June 5th - 27th, 1918:** H.M. Hospital Ship Llandovery Castle

#### FAST FACT

She was given a monthly salary of \$50 CAD which were deposited into a bank account under her name in Montreal

#### HOSPITALIZATIONS/MEDICAL INFO

**January 1st, 1917:** Hospitalized for laryngitis

**January 5th, 1917:** The Board recommended she take three weeks sick leave to England as she was suffering from debility as a result of overwork.

**March 18th, 1918 - April 5th, 1918:** Hospitalized for Bronchitis

### 1918

### Her Death

On June 5th 1918 Margaret was posted to H.M. Hospital Ship Llandovery Castle which was torpedoed by the Germans and sunk in the Irish Sea just 22 days later on June 27th, 1918. It is unknown whether her body was ever found, as it indicates she was "lost" after the sinking of the ship.

She is remembered at the Halifax Memorial in Nova Scotia, Canada



H.M. Hospital Ship, Llandovery Castle

### Her Legacy

#### FAST FACTS

She was mentioned in Despatches British Award/Decoration on May 28th, 1918.

Margaret was affectionately known as "little mother" by those in her care due to her dedication and devotion.



NURSING SISTER, MARGARET JANE FORTESCUE, C.A.M.C. WHO LOST HER LIFE BY THE SINKING OF H.M.S. "LLANDOVERY CASTLE" BY THE GERMANS, JUNE 27<sup>th</sup> 1918.



*"The Director of Medical Service, London, wrote: "Sister Fortescue was untiring in her efforts to do everything humanly possible for the sick and wounded under her care," and a former patient, a private in the Canadian Army; "Little Mother" (the name bestowed upon her by the patients whom she nursed) earned the V.C. as much as any man in the Army. .... Four years' untiring labour and fearless devotion, often caring for the wounded and dying in sound of guns and while bombs crashed through the hospital roof; through cold and heat, by days and dreary nights of ceaseless care, Nursing Sister Fortescue was ever brave and unafraid, knowing nothing else save the doing of her duty, no matter what the cost. We who received her tender ministrations have the proud and reverent memory of a good woman."*

### Course Connections

The Nursing Sisters project has opened many eyes to not only what family means and how it has evolved over time, but it also gave a glimpse into the intriguing lives of women serving as nurses during World War I. It was hard not to fall in love with Margaret as we pieced together her story that came to a devastating end, much like many of the Nursing Sisters. From reading about her devotion to nursing and helping people to her nicknames "daisy" and "little mother" that were given to her due to her kind-hearted, caring nature, learning about her life felt like an honour and being able to share it is even more of one. The stories of women in the war have been untold for far too long. This project shined a light on those untold stories that are much overdue. It is important to think about the strive for equality that has sparked change over time, in saying this, it is also important to see that we still have a ways to go. Nursing Sisters had to be given the title of "chief" in order to receive respect from men in the war as women were seen as subordinates to men during that time. Women in the war were also provided with the opportunity to vote and to be paid accordingly for their work and effort. At the time, these things would have been seen as a big deal due to the inequalities that were much more prominent, especially during the early 1900's. The military gave women the opportunity to be seen, heard, and respected. The Nursing Sisters may have changed the way some people viewed women during that time. During this course, family dynamics was a prominent concept discussed. Topics of "nuclear families" and how women were expected to fill the "housewife" role while the father was the breadwinner of the family. In saying this, most Nursing Sisters were single and being a part of the military was pivotal for women as they finally were starting to experience financial independence. In conclusion, this project was a great way to learn about history using a sociological lens, and speaking on behalf of the class, touched many hearts in doing so.

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## Images

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