

Fanny Mason, staff nurse

Unfortunately **Fanny Mason** [ph1] secured her place in history through being a staff nurse who lost her life during WW1. A copy of her photo found in Giggleswick Church archives is labelled 'Fanny Mason who was drowned on the Hospital Ship Salta, 10.iv.17.'

Fanny Mason who was drowned on
the Hospital Ship Salta. 10.iv.17.

Fanny, born on 7 June 1889, was the third daughter of **Thomas Mason**, a cabinet maker and his wife **Catherine Elizabeth (Kate) Capstick** from Hawes. The family moved to live at Ivy Fold in Giggleswick when Thomas secured a job with Brassingtons. Fanny went to the National School in Giggleswick and found employment as a housemaid in Crosshills before four years of training to become a nurse at Bagthorpe Infirmary in Nottingham. She left there on 23 September 1915, qualified as a staff nurse. Just one week later, back in Settle, on 30 September 1915 she signed up for 12 months' war service which was renewed a year later. She was employed in St Herbert's Military Hospital in Woolwich as part of the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service, Special Reserve, so may have known **Marion** and **Madge (Annie Margaret) Delves** of Long Preston who also served with QAIMNS



Nurse Mason, photograph by the Horner Studio.
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On Good Friday, 6 April 1917, Fanny wrote to her mother from the train to Southampton:

We are en route to Southampton and I must now make my will. My costume and blouse for (sister) Mary. You must have the furs. I have nothing to leave really, you will find a lot of rubbish in my trunk, save my summer combination and decent underclothing. I have about £8 with me and I have left £5 with Mr Keogh (director-general of the Army Medical Services) to put in War Savings for me. I got about £25 and have spent half on kit. Had a fearful rush to get ready. I guess I shall be fearfully sick. I shall want the white straw hat and black velour only.

No doubt we shall be alright. What has to be will be and we are quite safe on sea, as in a bombarded town. We had a taxi from Woolwich to Waterloo cost a dickens of a lot of money, 10/- each. Four of us are going. I think we shall have an easy time going out but will return busy. I rather hope we shall go to Alexandria and if possible, I will go along to Cairo to see (brother) Tom. It will be jolly.

Ugh! It is cold and snowing fast. My trunk may not reach you for some time. Sister and pal of mine is going to send it off. You had better get new key because the coat and skirt will be crushed. I just packed them anyhow. My old blue cape is for (sister) Sally.

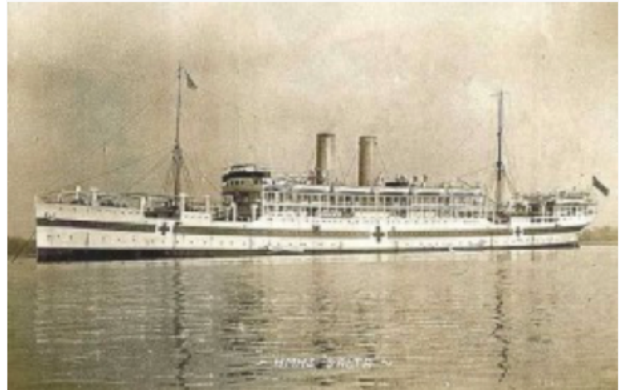
Love to father and yourself, (younger sisters) Madge and Lizzie,

Yours, Fanny

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Oh it's an awful long way to S Hampton but we are 1st class. Love Fanny.

Fanny's letter arrived at her mother's address on the same day that fate took its fatal twist. Fanny was *'missing presumed drowned'* on 10 April 1917 when HMHS *Salta*, a 7250 ton hospital ship, was mined and sank half a mile north from Whistle Buoy, Le Havre. *Salta* was in a convoy of three hospital ships, all clearly identified with a horizontal green band and red crosses, theoretically protecting it from an attack according to the Hague Convention [ph2]. The captain of the ship was concerned that he didn't have a pilot on board so moved aside to let the other two ships go front. However, this moved the *Salta* into a German minefield which had been laid the previous day. The mine exploded at 11.43am and the ship took just nine minutes to sink. Strong winds hampered the rescue operation, and a rescue patrol ship also sank. Before confirming her death the authorities wrote to dad Thomas Mason on 21 June to confirm that he had no further news of Fanny. He replied on 28 June to say *'we have had no further news of our Darling Fanny'*.



Out of 204 passengers and crew, the captain, nine nurses, 42 wounded and 79 crew perished. Fanny's body was never found. Reports at the time suggested they were sailing into dock to collect more casualties. The Craven Herald reported, *'the drowning of Nurse Fanny Mason by the sinking of the hospital ship 'Salta' on the 10th instant caused quite a feeling of gloom in the village, and of abhorrence for the Huns, and much sympathy is extended to her parents. She had been in training as a nurse for the past four years, being successful in all her examinations, and a splendid career was in front of her. She had endeared herself to all her patients by her sympathy and feeling for them in their troubles. Nurse Mason is the first nurse from the Settle District who has made the supreme sacrifice.'* Fanny was almost 28. She was followed by Nurse **Doris Procter** in December 1918.

The Five Sisters' Window in York Minster is dedicated as a war memorial to the women of the British Empire who lost their lives, 1914-1918. Fanny and Doris are commemorated in St Nicholas' Chapel in the North Transept of the Minster. Fanny is remembered on numerous memorials, far more than most casualties, but, for some reason, was not initially included in the publication *'Craven's Part in the Great War.'* This wasn't because she was female as fellow nurse Doris Procter is included in the original book. Her life is remembered at The Royal Herbert Hospital in Woolwich, St Alkelda's Church in Giggleswick, St John's Methodist Church in Settle, on the brass plaque on the Queen's Rock bridge and on the Settle Primary School memorial (which is surprising as her war records clearly state that she attended Giggleswick National School and lived in Giggleswick). The Ste Marie cemetery in Le Havre contains 24 bodies from the disaster and also remembers, by name, those who were never found.

Fanny was one of 12 children of Thomas and Kate Mason although four died in infancy, including twin sisters, **Annie** and **Agnes Mason**. Brother **Harry Mason** was born and died in Giggleswick and was buried in an unmarked grave in Settle graveyard, *Old DX70*, all by himself. Being born during the 1880s and 1890s several of Fanny's siblings also served in the war. Her youngest brother **Miles Leighton Mason** was so keen to sign up that he lied about his age, pretending he was two years older. He served with the King's Royal Rifle Corps and survived to work as a speciality salesman in Huddersfield. Brother **Tom Mason** served with the RAF. Oldest sister **Sarah Jane (Sally) Mason**

also served as a nurse during the war. In 1926 she married **John Edwin Gilchrist**, a clerk working for the army and they lived in Wiltshire.

Thomas and Kate's second daughter **Mary Martha Mason** also had a bad war. In 1914 she married **Frank Harrison**, a tailor from Barrow-in-Furness who served with the Royal Engineers, signing up as one of Tunstell's men. Although surviving the war itself Frank died in 1921 from *'Diabetes attributed to Service'*, having spent time in Grantham Military Hospital and Mary Martha received a war widow's pension. Despite living with Mary Martha in Tems Street, Giggleswick, Frank was not remembered on local war memorials. Mary Martha had two daughters with Frank and was photographed with the eldest, **Elsie Harrison** [ph3]. In 1928 Mary married **George Atkinson** of Settle [ph4] who appeared to work with the Automobile Association, living in Tems Street, Giggleswick. Mary Martha and George were buried in unmarked graves in Giggleswick graveyard.

Diabetes attributed to Service



The most unusual life was that of Fanny's sister **Elizabeth (Lizzie) Mason** who went to work as a nurse at the Skipton Poor Law Institution. There she met a fellow nurse, **William George Greenway** and then found herself pregnant. William did the honourable thing and they married in July 1928. Their son, **Thomas Mason Greenway** was born a couple of months later. However, it transpired that William was already married. Seven years previously he had married **Edith Ellen Copson** in Upton-on Severn but left her a year later. The judge said he *'had no doubt that Greenway married the second woman out of chivalry but he would have to go to prison for two months'* [1]. There are no more records for naughty William.

CHARGE OF BIGAMY.

CASE FROM UPTON-ON-SEVERN.

At Worcester Assizes, on Wednesday, **William George Greenway** (32), a clerk, of Heckingham Poor Law Institution, Norfolk, pleaded guilty to committing bigamy with **Elizabeth Mason at Keighley**, his wife, **Edith Ellen Greenway**, being then alive.

Mr. C. E. W. Simes, for the prosecution, said **Greenway** married a Miss **Edith Ellen Copson** at Upton-on-Severn in 1921, and left her the following year. He seemed to have got the second girl, whom he met at **Skipton Poor Law Institution**, into trouble, and endeavoured to make an honest woman of her by going through a form of marriage with her at Keighley in 1928.

Mr. Justice Shearman said he had no doubt that **Greenway** "married" the second woman out of chivalry, but he would have to go to prison for two months.

Lizzie lived in Keighley with her mother after her father, **Thomas Mason**, died in 1924 — he had been ill for several years and had relocated to Morecambe. **William George Greenway's** first wife married a policeman, **Reginald Edwin Cripps** in Warwickshire in 1930.

Son **Thomas Mason Greenway** was instrumental in researching information on the life and death of **Fanny Mason** for inclusion in the online version of **Craven's Part** in the Great War. **Fanny**, her mother **Catherine Elizabeth (Kate) Mason**, youngest sister **Elsie Marjorie (Madge)** and **Elizabeth (Lizzie) Greenway** are all remembered on a memorial stone in **St Stephen's Churchyard** in Keighley. Perhaps **Thomas Mason Greenway** organised that too?



This account has been compiled by Sarah Lister as part of the Settle Graveyard Project which has recorded gravestone inscriptions, updated church records and researched the lives of those buried. It has

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been written in good faith with no offence intended. If I have inadvertently included errors or breached any copyright I apologise and would welcome corrections.

The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project and can be found on [dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/settle graveyard project](http://dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/settle-graveyard-project). The 'Old Settle' family tree on Ancestry.co.uk includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project is ongoing and welcomes queries and information on settleresearch@gmail.com. Latest news and events are on the Facebook page 'Settle Graveyard Project'.

ph1 – 2022.1.28.13 from the Horner Photographic Studio Collection provided courtesy of the Museum of North Craven Life, ph2 – credited to Craven's Part in the Great War, source unknown, ph3 – credited to family descendants via Ancestry.co.uk, username malcolmgagg67, ph4 – username Michael Cox



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