

WORKER KATHLEEN ROSE SOLLIS

11334, Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps

Died aged 20 on 22 March 1918

Buried with honour at *Tewkesbury Cemetery*; C-317

Not commemorated in Tewkesbury in the Abbey

She was, however, commemorated on Tewkesbury Memorial on *Armed Forces Day* in 2018



Tewkesbury Cemetery
Grave C-317



Women's Army
Auxiliary Corps



Queen Mary's
Army Auxiliary Corps

KATHLEEN ROSE SOLLIS was born on 20 March 1898, the third daughter and one of nine children of William Edwin Sollis and Elizabeth (formerly Parsons), both from Tewkesbury. The family was then living at 11 North East Terrace and William was working as a Cellar-man. By 1911 William had become a Brewer and the family had moved to 88A Church Street when Kathleen was still at school. At the time of her death in 1918, her parents were living at 69 Church Street and her father was a Funeral Labourer.

Kathleen enlisted, perhaps in Bristol, in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). It was formed in March 1917 to undertake non-combatant tasks that did not require heavy labour; one of its objectives was to free men for front-line service. The unit was granted the title of Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps in April 1918 but the Corps was disbanded in September 1921. Although in uniform and working under the War Office, the Corps was essentially a civilian formation.

Worker Kathleen Rose Sollis died on 22 March 1918. As a Worker (equivalent to Private) she was serving on the Home front in the Isolation Hospital at Tredington. In two articles, the *Tewkesbury Record* mentioned her '*painfully sad death*': she had been taken ill whilst on leave in Tewkesbury, visiting her sister in hospital. She was taken back to her place of work at Tredington where she died, at the age of just 20. The official cause of death was '*acute cerebro-spinal meningitis*'. She was one of many whose death was attributable to the influenza epidemic that was rife at the time. The *Tewkesbury Register* expressed '*sympathy for bereaved parents [who] throughout their married life, have*

experienced a considerable amount of trouble'. Kathleen was buried on 27 March 1918 in a grave with a CWGC headstone in consecrated ground in *Tewkesbury Cemetery*. The cost of burial was 17/6d. (88p), no doubt paid by her grieving family. Two months later her older sister, Eileen Olive, died at the Rural Hospital and was buried in a plot nearby.

Kathleen was buried in a CWGC grave but her name has not been included in any of the official memorials in the town. However, she is commemorated, together with other female casualties of the Great War, on the Roll of Honour in the north transept of York Minster. Also there is the 'Five Sisters' window, the main memorial to British and Colonial women who died serving their country. It was unveiled on 24 June 1925 by the then Duchess of York (the late Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother) and dedicated by the Archbishop of York.

Nearby is the memorial screen of the Chapel of St. Nicholas in the north transept. There are 12 panels, on which are inscribed the names of 1,465 '*women of the Empire*' who died during or because of the after-effects of the War. As one would expect, the nursing services are well represented, with the main cause of death being '*Spanish flu*'. Also included are munitions workers, motor transport, the Land Army and other women's organisations that contributed to the war effort.