

Savernake Cottage Hospital's very own Who's Who

Name: Miss Evelyn Rossell Lavington M.B.E. A.R.R.C. 1875 – 1956
Matron of Savernake Hospital from 1919 - 1937



Evelyn Lavington was the eldest daughter of Mr & Mrs Thomas Lavington, born in Fyfield House near Marlborough. It may well have been her father's name that appears on the original accounts in 1872, when the second Savernake Hospital was built and the fundraising accounts were examined by Thos R. Lavington, Manager of the North Wilts. Bank. *(As yet unsubstantiated information which doubtless will be researched in time)*

Evelyn took up nursing on leaving school and despite poor health, became a Sister at St Thomas's Hospital in London. She trained in the Nightingale School, where she also met Florence Nightingale on occasions, who although elderly, was still taking great interest in the trainee nurses.

Health problems forced Miss Lavington to leave London and returning to Marlborough in 1914, she worked voluntarily in the Red Cross Hospital, subsequently becoming Matron. Her voluntary work continued at Savernake between the two world wars, transforming this small 20 bedded hospital into one of the best Cottage Hospitals in the country. With new buildings, equipment and modern ways of nursing, the success of Savernake attracted visiting specialists and huge support from the community. Finding 100 beds was the limit, she would 'top and tail' children in the beds (much to the surprise of H.R.H. Prince of Wales when he visited) and willingly give up her own bed to a patient when required.



She was a superb organizer, a woman of vision, strong character and determination if the reports of the time are to be believed. Her loving kindness was legendary and generosity of spirit went hand in hand with her outstanding skills. Her devotion as a nurse was unsurpassed; It was said of her that if she saw a chance of saving a life, she would sit up all night with a patient, continuing her work as usual next day.

Her resignation from Savernake was prompted by more ill health and was accepted with deepest regret. This much loved Matron lives on in the spirit of Savernake Hospital and now, the whole community welcomes Prospect Hospice moving into The Lavington Centre of Savernake Hospital in 2015.

