

Professor Christine Hallett's Tribute to Sue Light

I first met Sue Light when I was working on my first book. Like so many of her friends, I encountered her website, 'Scarlet Finders' before I met Sue herself.

Her work was incredibly impressive, and I can only guess at the numbers of hours/days/weeks/months/years she spent meticulously transcribing Dame Maud McCarthy's official war diary. I mention the war diary because, as far as I know, that was Sue's first great web-project.

But her work grew and grew – way beyond this first piece until it became THE authoritative resource on the nursing services of the First World War. As more and more people discovered [Scarlet Finders](#) - and as the Centenary of the First World War drew near – people came to her for advice, in increasing numbers.

She must have been inundated with emails. Yet my experience was that she always responded within 48 hours, and always with a hugely helpful and meticulously-researched piece of advice.

This was one of Sue's primary qualities: her integrity. She never fudged a response; nor did she ever just say: 'Sorry, don't know'. She always responded to a request for assistance by putting all her energy and care into doing her best for the enquirer – and, of course, for the early-twentieth-century nurses themselves. Respecting their memories mattered as much as helping her colleagues in the present day.

She was, without doubt, one of the kindest and most generous people I have ever met – generous with her time, and with her energy. Although her spirit could be fierce and implacable, her attitude to the people around her was always courteous, gentle and thoughtful. I always liked to think that she was not only researching and writing about the nurses of the First World War – those indomitable women who endured so much and who did such significant, yet largely hidden, work – she was also, somehow channelling all of their best qualities.

Her work made an enormous contribution to our understanding of them; and her life – its purpose, its honesty, its intrinsic value – helped make the sacrifices of that earlier generation seem worthwhile. She was a very special person, and I shall never forget her.