Women In Uniform

Nurses Who Served in The Great War

1914 - 1919

Compiled for Darebin Heritage by Brian Membrey
Our cover illustration shows members of the Australian Army Nursing Service, pictured on camels in front of the Sphinx and pyramids, circa 1915

Courtesy Australian War Memorial  P00411.001
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT
The second edition of this document contains some additional information, but more importantly a number of corrections provided by Dr Kirsty Harris, Honorary Fellow, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at Melbourne University who has conducted extensive Research into the history of Australian nurses during the First World War and published several articles on the subject.

Please note that the World War 1 Australian Army Nursing Service website referenced in some earlier versions of this work has for some reason been removed.
Introduction

This document is a companion volume to the In Memoriam Rolls compiled of those from the current-day City of Darebin that died during or as a result of the First World War. "From Darebin" in the original work included those living, with next of kin, or working within the boundaries of today's city. 1

The In Memoriam Roll includes two women from the district that died as a result of war service - the second, Amy Alice Simpson in fact one of the later entries to be made after it was discovered that the "A. Simpson" listed on the South Preston State School Honour Board was in fact the only female ex-pupil of nearly 300 that enlisted, although perhaps in an early example of equality of the sexes, not acknowledged as such!

Darebin’s Great War : Of Matters Local, Part One of the Darebin research includes details of all of the local nurses that are known to have enlisted - given that volume now runs to around 250 pages, the background of these remarkable women and the conditions under which they served has been extracted into a more manageable size and included on the Darebin Heritage website.

A companion volume which includes the Darebin nurses and those from the other northern Melbourne councils who are stakeholders in the WikiNorthia project - Moreland, Whittlesea, Nillimbuk and Heidelberg - is available via the WikiNorthia site (a search on "Nurses" should do the trick)! 2

Background

Almost without exception, the enlistment of local women into the Nursing Service drew no attention from any of the local newspapers - the identical Preston and Northcote Leader, the Brunswick and Coburg Leader, the Heidelberg Times or the Evelyn Observer (renamed as the Eltham and Whittlesea Advertiser from 1 January, 1917).

There was perhaps a reason for this as we will see.

According to the Australian War Memorial, Australian nurses as part of the Australian Army Medical Corps served in Egypt, Lemnos, England, France, Belgium, Palestine, Greece, Salonika, Mesopotamia and India as well as on hospital ships, initially in the Dardanelles and later between England, Egypt and Australia. 3

Few Australian troops were involved at any of the four latter venues; the campaigns in Greece and Salonika were conducted primarily by British and French troops, later joined by Italian, Serbian and Russian units), Mesopotamia, (Iraq), British and French, and Indian service was a mixture of British troops and the native population.

Volume Three of the Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services suggests 2,562 nurses served in the AANS, 2,139 on overseas service and there were 423 nursing positions in Home Service filled by an unknown number of individual nurses who either later embarked for overseas or remained in Australia throughout the war. The exact figure of 2,139 has been disputed over the years - the Australian War Memorial suggests instead the more generalised "over 2,000".

The first nurses to embark - around 65 and 40 with No.1 and No. 2 Australian General Hospitals (AGH) left with the "first fleet" of Australians to leave for the front (then believed likely to be France) in mid-October, 1914.

Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Service

During the early part of the war, another 130 nurses served with the Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS) under the auspices of the Australian Government.

The latter was one of the nursing arms of the British Army. There was such a backlog of registered nurses waiting to enlist in the Australian services that in the first twelve months of the War many paid their own passage to England where their experience was welcomed with open arms with the horrendous fighting on the Western Front.

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1 The City of Northcote at the time did not include Fairfield or Alphington, which were then part of the Shire of Heidelberg.

2 http://www.wikinorthia.net.au/

3 Mesopotamia is open to question - Basra was a port-of-call for vessels transporting nurses to Greece and Salonika, but it is believed that no nurses actually undertook duties there. The Official History specifies "wounded in Mesopotamia", thus in all probability, nurses serving in India.
The Queen Alexandra option provided somewhat controversial - the local authorities initially refused to recognise the time spent in England by the Australian nurses and until later in the War, those serving in the Queen Alexandra Service were forced to pay their own way back to Australia to re-enlist and lost any seniority that they had earned overseas.

Attitudes later changed and there are undoubtedly exceptions, but there have been no examples sighted of a nurse returning and re-enlisting.

Those remaining in England after the war were at least treated to free passage home - the details of their embarkation for return is, sadly, the only record remaining in the National Archives of their service and there is no evidence of anyone from Darebin with the unit.

**Casualties**

Of the 130 Australian nurses that volunteered for the Queen Alexandra Nursing Service, the Australian War Memorial Commemorative Roll of Australians that died while serving with forces of other allied countries shows eight that met their demise while on active service: two at sea, two in Australia (including May Dickson, the first Australian woman to receive a full military funeral when she was interred at Coburg General Cemetery) and one in each of Egypt, Palestine, Italy, and France.

One other nurse, Isabel Russell Ross from Yarra Glen died post-war in the Caulfield Military Hospital.

**Definitions and Glossary**

Perhaps a few definitions may be appropriate here.

(AANS Reserve) The Australian Army Nursing Service Reserve was formed in 1902 when the first Australian Defence Force was organised after Federation the previous year. The Reserve was modelled on an earlier Reserve established by the New South Wales Colonial Government in 1899 and was a volunteer force of nurses who declared their willingness to be called up in times of national emergency - be it military threat, epidemics or natural disasters.

It was substantially different from the later compulsory Universal Military Training established for men - the nurses to be accepted into the Service had to have had three years of training, and to have been suitable examined and certified - for the men, it was a system of basic training from scratch.

Following the outbreak of war, notices were sent all Reserve nurses asking whether they would be prepared to serve overseas or alternatively in Australia. For the embarkations of the first nurses for Nos 1 and 2 AGH in October, 1914, preference was given to those that had served with the Reserve and it provided the Principal Matrons, Matrons and most of the Sisters that left Australia at this time.

(AANS AIF) Within six months of the outbreak of the war, military hospitals had been established in each of the six states with a total of over 5,000 beds - initially for treatment of those taken ill or injured in camp, but with sufficient reserves for the repatriation and care of soldiers invalided from the Front.

This was established as the nursing arm of the Australian Imperial Force and allowed nurses registered with the AANS Reserve to resign from that service and enlist for overseas duties with the AIF.

The same conditions as to experience and qualification applied, with the additional requirement that only single or widowed women between the ages of 20 and 45 were accepted. Resignation was mandatory if the nurse married while serving in the Nursing Service - there was one from Darebin in this category, and two from other northern suburbs in the wider WikiNorthia version of the Roll.

Matrons, Sisters and Staff Nurses that had served with the Reserve were given preference and seniority, whilst a State-based quota system was adopted for allocation of the remaining positions.

The general proposal at this stage was that Australian nurses posted overseas would care for Australian soldiers in A.I.F. hospitals, but the A.I.F. implemented a policy that wounded soldiers who were not expected to be fit to return to the front within six months should be set home for recovery in Australia which initially reduced the opportunity for nurses to serve overseas.

In July, 1916, the Australian Government received from its British counterpart a request for another 100 Australian nurses - 50 for Bombay, 50 for Malta - for Imperial Service for one year or termination of hostilities.

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4 Harriet Mary Hazel Bain (p13) was a late discovery after the initial version of the roll was completed - it was in fact a newspaper notice of her wedding in India that brought her and her family (who had just moved to Northcote) to light.
Given the previous administrative problems with the QAIMNS, the Director-General of Medical Services in Australia insisted that the nurses should serve only as members of the AANS, with Australian rank and conditions and as part of the A.I.F., although they would be available to the British Matron-in-Chief for dispersal to areas where they would be most useful.\(^5\)

**(AGH)** Australian General Hospital. These were the hospitals established for the treatment of the wounded established in Egypt, England and eventually in France. There were also AGH’s in most Australian cities, the first two in Melbourne No. 5 in St. Kilda Road and No. 11 in Kooyong Road, Caulfield. No. 16 at Mont Park was later added, the last facility in Australia to be so classified during the war.

**(AAH)** Australian Auxiliary Hospitals were for treatment and ongoing recuperation of patients; they, along with various other types of medical facilities did not take in wounded directly, this was the role of a General Hospital.

**(HMAHS)** His Majesty’s Australian Hospital Ship. There were two Australian vessels specifically equipped for transport of the wounded or ill - No. 1 *HMAHS Karoola* (7,391 tons) and No. 2 *HMAHS Kanoura* (6,942 tons). They were more commonly referred to as No. 1 HS and No. 2 HS respectively.\(^6\) Some other vessels were used in the early part of the war, especially during the Gallipoli campaign where a number of hastily-converted British steamers transported wounded to Egypt or Crete.

**(HMAT)** His Majesty’s Australian Transports were mainly British-owned liners requisitioned by the Australian Government, most of which were returned to their owners by 1917. They carried troops to Egypt and later France or England and were supplemented by a number of locally owned vessels (many belonging to the Burns, Philp Company) which carried men to and from the islands north of Australia, some of which were German-controlled territories at the outbreak of the war.

**(RMS)** There was consistently a shortage of suitable accommodation on troop transports - around a third of the group recorded here travelled to Sydney to embark, and there was a similar mix of those that travelled by modified troop transports and commercial shipping, typically Royal Mail Steamers (RMS). Even the latter must have caused some concerns over discipline - one RMS collected around 80 nurses in Sydney and Melbourne, to be joined by around 350 servicemen in Adelaide!

**(Attestation)** The Attestation form was completed by a recruiting officer - Medical Officer for nurses - in conjunction with the volunteer and as well as recording basic details as to place of birth, location of qualification, next-of-kin and previous medical service (but oddly not an address). It was a certification that the nurse was prepared "... to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth".

The servicemen’s Attestation usually also carried a clause that he was willing to serve until the end of the War and for a further four months following the cessation of hostilities - this does not appear on any of the nurse’s records sighted, although it is believed to have been a condition of them being accepted.\(^7\)

The form comprised three sections - general identification, the attestation, and a Certificate of Medical Inspection, but rather strangely, it did not include a residential address, Religion, and Medical Officer for nurses (Attestation) in \(\ldots\) to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth."

The Early Days

The nurses that enlisted were across the board somewhat older than the servicemen because of the three year training requirement, and it seems the more mature nurses took precedence when considered for overseas service, although this changed later in the war when additional pressure for nurses meant younger women were taken.

\(^5\) The 50 requested for Malta served in Egypt where it was believe that would be of more benefit to the A.I.F.

\(^6\) The sister ships and troop transports HMAT *A62 Wandilla* and *A69 Warilda* of 7,785 tons while under the control of the Australian Government were converted to hospital ships and lent to British authorities where they were manned by exclusively British crews and medical staff. *Warilda* was torpedoed and sunk by the U-boat UC-49 in the English Channel 3 August 1918 while transporting wounded soldiers from Le Havre, France to Southampton despite being marked clearly with the Red Cross. 123 lives were lost.

\(^7\) See also Kyarra [page 29]

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The Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services, 1914–1918 reveals of the 2,299 that embarked (some on a second occasion), 1,184 were between the ages of 31 and 30, 947 between 31 and 40, 91 where 41 or older, and just seven under the age of 21 years. (No such comparison has been sighted for servicemen).

Although no detailed breakdown was given, this probably gives a weighted average of around 28 or 29 years of age, but the Darebin group was considerably older, the average age just a little over 36.5 years of age - the youngest 23, the eldest a little debatable, she was 46 when she enlisted in 1915 and 44 when she re-enlisted two years later after the upper age limit of 45 years was introduced!

(It is only a small sample, but the Darebin group provides a remarkable statistic - the date of death is known of nine of the 16 that survived the war and reveals the average age at the time of their death as just on 81 years; given the shorter life expectancy of just on a hundred years ago, this was probably somewhere between 13 and 15 years longer than the general average. The ages on death ranged from 73 (probably five years beyond that of the general populous) to 89 years of age).

Despite their training, the nurses that embarked with the first AGH contingents in October, 1914 were in fact somewhat poorly paid - 100 shillings a month or just over 3 shillings for a Staff Nurse and 6 shillings for a Sister - compared to 5 shillings for a Private and 8/6d for a Sergeant, the roughly-equivalent male ranks.

The situation changed dramatically with the introduction of the AIF arm of the AANS - by the time the first nurses embarked under the new unit, the rates had increased substantially and they were better paid than the average male Joe Private - the first nurses embarked overseas in July, 1915 at a base daily rate of 7/10d per day or more than half as much again as a humble Private on 5/- (although, unlike the nurse's rate, this was later increased and those in the ranks became the "six bob a day" servicemen).

For those with the more senior rank of Sister, the per diem rate was 10/4d, again somewhat more than that of a Sergeant in the infantry.  

What is perhaps surprising (or perhaps not given their relatively mature age), just two of the local group of eighteen whose post-war records run through to the 1930s is known to have ever married after returning to Australia.

Whereas the clamour for more and more soldiers was constant throughout the war and often fell short of the numbers required, the demand for nurses usually came after specific requests from the Australian military and on occasions, the British Governments for more nurses to be sent overseas and vacancies thus became available.

Rather than visiting drill halls or municipal offices, nurses had to apply to the Principal Matron of the AGH to which they nominally belonged. Victoria as No. 3 Military District was assigned initially along with 1 and 5 Districts to AGH under Principal Matron Miss Jane Bell; 2, 4 and 6 Districts to AGH under Miss Ellen Gould from New South Wales.

Nurses that had been in the Reserve Service had to formally resign from the Reserve and then enlist in the AANS to serve overseas. This process was identical to that in place for soldiers in the permanent forces who wished to serve overseas with the A.I.F.

A medical examination was necessary and generally for Victorian nurses conducted at the Melbourne Town Hall, but perhaps because of the sensitivities of the day, very few of the results of these appear in National Archive files, whereas for men, the examination and physical characteristics were part of the Attestation and invariably included. One of the rare ones surviving of the local nurses was that of Amy Simpson, the report having her standing 5'3 but weighing 13 stone!

An alternative series of files in the National Archives which records the details of servicemen and women that volunteered, but who were rejected lists some 43 nurses, but with no reason being given.

Although the logic would struggle to pass Statistics 101, this represents a rejection rate of a fraction over 2 per cent based on the 2,139 that embarked; the rejection rate for men based on volunteers from today's City of Darebin was about 6 per cent.

There was another minor variation between the sexes - for men, the enlistment date had little significance except in a small number of cases where they were granted what was known as 1914 or "Special Leave" after completing four years' service, but for nurses, it had some significance in the right to promotion and as a result was always recorded as the date of actual embarkation rather than that of volunteering.

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8 Dr. Kirsty Harris makes a point here - Sisters and Nurses were considered officers but not paid officers wages. They also received less pay than nurses from other nations, for example, Canada.
9 Amy Simpson, later Cordingly [page 23] and Thora McLennan [page 22].

DAREBIN’S GREAT WAR : WOMEN IN UNIFORM
The other odd little difference was that the standard for servicemen on Attestation was to agree to serve “for the duration of the war plus four months” - the “four months” clause does not appear for nurses, although it is believed to have been a condition of enlistment an in practice all of them remained in England until at least March, 1919.

**Embarkation**

Given the nurses were highly trained, experienced in the care of patients, and in most cases assigned to a specific posting, the nurses embarked for overseas much sooner than their male counterparts once they had been accepted, completed Attestation and passed the medical.

For men, there was usually a six to eight week minimum period in camp regardless of their early time with either the volunteer forces or under the Compulsory Military Training Scheme under the Defence Act of 1909; for nurses it was often just a fortnight, and in many cases given the lack of suitable transport for nurses, a day or so of that may have been spent travelling from Melbourne to Sydney or vice versa.

Nurses embarked on a mixture of A.I.F. transports, Royal Mail Steamers, and in a small number of cases, on the hospital ships *Karoola* and *Kanouma*.

Our list of nurses that served is taken from the embarkation roll "Nurses (July 1915 - Nov 1918)" where there is an obvious link to the Darebin district via the residential address of the nurse or next of kin.

Some nurses shipped with the either with the first convoy as mentioned above or as part of the First Reinforcements (May, 1915) for 1 AGH then at Helopolis, Cairo, or 2 AGH in Alexandria and are included under alternative rolls. These include the first embarkation of Matron Edith Cornwell [page 22], but reveal no other nurse from the Darebin district in their ranks.

**Bringing Them Home**

The Armistice in November, 1918 brought great relief throughout the world, but presented the A.I.F. with a number of logistical problems.

The first was the return to Australia of an estimated 167,000 still serving overseas - 87,000 men in France and Belgium; 63,000 in the United Kingdom, many of whom were in hospitals and convalescent homes, and training in camps; and 17,000 in Egypt, Syria, and minor theatres of war. 10

Even before the men were “demobilised” - it had previously been decided that the term “repatriated” would not be used - there was the question of how to usefully employ the men currently in or returning to England while they awaited their chance to embark - the A.I.F. was not part of the occupying force in Germany and had no further military role after the cessation of hostilities.

The third problem, and certainly one that had impacts in Darebin was how to cope with the influx of 167,000 returning to the labour market in Australia, especially following a period in 1917 and early 1918 of considerable industrial unrest.

For the nurses, this probably had little impact - with a substantial percentage of men returning that required further care, their services were almost guaranteed as being in demand once they arrived home, but for many, however, a unique opportunity opened up when the newly-formed Repatriation Department announced a scheme for advanced education "for those in a position to avail themselves of the training”. 11

There were a few examples of Darebin men taking advantage of the trainings scheme - one, William Dennerstein enlisted giving his occupation of “clerk and musician” was granted three month’s paid Leave as well as course fees of £9/9/- to study “violin and harmony” at the Royal Academy of Music; another, Samuel Fergus Ferguson, a bank clerk but with noted skills in shorthand and typing was granted three month’s leave to learn journalism with the * Pall Mall Gazette*. Coincidentally, both seem to have later taken their skills overseas after their return to Australia.

The Defence Department decreed that all nurses regardless of where they had served were entitled to one month’s leave in England before returning to Australia. (’Entitled” may be an official, but somewhat provocative word - undoubtedly many nurses, especially those serving in Egypt and the Middle East wanted to get home to family and friends without the distraction of a week or more voyage to England, a month’s Leave, and then another six-week trip back to Australia. None of the Darebin nurses in these theatres returned directly to Australia).

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10 Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918, Volume XI – Australia During the War (p985)

11 There was an earlier and short-lived plan for qualified tradesmen to work briefly in England to re-hone their skills before returning, but with Britain itself having to accommodate millions of returning servicemen, this proved unsuccessful.
The training scheme in England did provide a welcome alternative for nurse to expand their qualifications. The Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services suggests that over 300 nurses took advantage of the scheme.

The most preferred courses - many of which were conducted at London’s Polytechnic - were Domestic Science, and Motor Driving “the call of the open road induce [many] to seek proficiency in motor driving, presumably as an adjunct to their future careers” (77 each), Cooking (34), Sanitation and Hygiene (34), Midwifery (23) and Massage (20). 12

Wounded and Their Care

The chances of a serviceman at the front lasting much more than twelve months without being wounded, accidentally injured or suffering from an illness given the horrendous conditions in the front lines were low.

Field Ambulance Brigades were perhaps the unsung heroes of the war - the stretcher bearers risked life and limb to collect the wounded from the field of battle, often under heavy enemy fire - yet S.B’s as they were known were ruled ineligible for the Victoria Cross.

Many regular servicemen also acted as stretcher bearers when wounded comrades needed assistance and there are a handful of instances in our In Memoriam Roll of men being killed while performing this extra duty. The Brigades also included ambulance drivers, usually motorised, but given the horrendous conditions in wet months of the Western Front, horses and mules were also used to draw ambulances.

After being collected from the field, a casualty’s first stop was a Regimental Aid Station, a post in, or close behind the line where the regimental medical officer and aides attached to the serviceman’s unit were based.

A Dressing Station was part of the Field Ambulance behind the lines to which wounded were sent from Regimental Aid posts to have wounds dressed before being carried to a Casualty Clearing Station (CCS).

These were hospitals (generally located near a rail-head) charged with clearing the wounded to a base hospital.

The admission to a CCS appears to be the differentiation used by the Army between a serviceman being classified as ‘Killed In Action’ or ‘Died Of Wounds’ although undoubtedly, many men expired on the battlefield hours and in some cases days after they were wounded, but before they could be located and brought back for medical treatment.

There are no examples on our In Memoriam archives of a death attributed as having Died of Wounds before being admitted to a CCS - perhaps not surprising as Regimental Aid posts at, or close to the lines would be rather more concerned with emergency treatment than recording details of the men they were trying to keep alive.

From a CCS (where a high percentage of those classified as Died Of Wounds are attributed as dying), a wounded man could be possibly sent to a Stationary or a General Hospital - well behind the lines and the first level of care that we would perhaps consider as of ‘hospital’ quality today.

At this point, a decision was made depending of the seriousness of the wounds as to whether the serviceman should be repatriated to a General Hospital, initially in England and later established at Rouen and Abbeville in France. 13

Major capital cities in Australia also had hospitals of this nature to treat volunteers that contracted diseases while in camp - there were 256 volunteers that died of meningitis in Australia in the year to 30 June, 1916 - and servicemen that required treatment after returning to Australia.

In England (and earlier in Egypt), there was an additional category - the No 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield Park did not accept casualties directly from the fighting, but was charged with treating on an on-going basis those released from General Hospitals but who still required bed-side care.

Most servicemen considered to be have suffered wounds that warranted transfer back to Egypt and later England underwent a Medical Board Assessment as to their fitness to continue in service.

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12 Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services, 1914–1918 (p582)
13 This was the prescribed protocol - it must be born on mind that in many cases, wounded servicemen were simply treated on an “as needs” basis to preserve life and sometimes limb.
The official position introduced after the start of the war was that if the wounds were considered sufficiently serious as to render the patient incapable of returning to active service within six months, then he should be returned to Australia for “rest” or possibly discharge depending on a local Medical Board examination.

Those considered likely to recover to a state where would be fit for active service within six months remained in Egypt and England, generally serving as part of their recovery on a variety of light duties at training camps, stores depots, or in military disciplinary or administrative roles before returning to their units in the field.

Like most of the war, “the official position” was somewhat different from the reality - some after returning to England were considered as only fit for light local duties for anything up to eighteen months; others returned home were declared fit and re-embarked within two or three weeks after they arrived back in Australia.

Those repatriated back to Australia usually travelled via one of the two hospital ships and depending on the nature of their wounds or illness were classified as “Bed”, “Bunk” or “Hammock” patients for the voyage. The ships also had mental wards and Isolation Wards for those with contagious diseases, especially influenza in the latter months of the war.

After invalids had reached Australia, and had received any treatment in Base Hospitals, a military medical board determined whether they were to be returned to duty or discharged as unfit for further military service. In the latter case, each soldier was instructed to apply to the Deputy Commissioner for Pensions in his State for consideration of his entitlement to a pension.

A Letter From India

From what can be discerned nearly a hundred years later, just one letter from the district nurses appeared in a local newspaper, one from Nurse Elsie Deakin to “Mr. Worboys” and published in of the _Heidelberg News_ published on 6 January, 1917:

> Dear Mr. Worboys. - It seems quite a long time since I farewelled my home and the Fairfield people, though with seeing new sights and having new work the time has in many ways passed quickly, or I would have written before. Thanks for your kind letter to Adelaide; it came when I was feeling rather lonely and homesick and cheered me much. My writing-case has been most useful, and I wonder what I would have done without it. The inscription you sent is ever before me, so I am constantly reminded of the thoughts and loving wishes of my faithful friends.

> My thoughts are with you all in your service at Fairfield, which has so many happy associations for me, and I pray that your work for the Master maybe greatly blessed. We had rather a rough trip over, and a good many of the nurses were sick. I was rather miserable for a time, but cheered up and very much enjoyed the change and rest after our strenuous days before leaving Melbourne. We were glad to reach Colombo, and thought the harbor there beautiful, and it was all so strange to us.

> The natives are most interesting and amusing, and we enjoyed the rickshaw rides through the various beautiful gardens and drives. At the end of the third day we left really glad to go, for we were told of the great need of nurses in Bombay. Now we are really here and feel settled. The Indian Government are forming an Australian Hospital, so we are fortunate to be kept together. The building we are in is new and very handsome, and really belongs to the railway offices. We have 600 beds altogether, a good many medical as well as surgical cases, for owing to the climate and the hard conditions the men are living under, disease of many kinds is prevalent.

> I have charge of a surgical ward of 100 beds, and find it quite a responsibility. The work is very interesting, though often sad and depressing. The physical needs of the men we can do much for, but many of them have been two years away from home, and with the constant moving round the letters go astray, and they are so homesick and lonely, and it is these we feel so powerless to help. They are brave and seldom complain, but when they are ill they feel the need of their own people, and talk continually of home.

> One poor man upset me terribly last week. He had realised he could not live, and was very quiet and resigned while sensible, but he became delirious and only then we knew all his anxiety; it was so hard to leave his children to strangers’ care, for their mother had died after he left home. Poor fellow; his sufferings and longings are over, and we could not but be glad to know he is at rest, though the thought of those little children left so alone in the old country is often in my mind, and that is only one case of hundreds.

> I hope the people will to a certain extent realise and always remember the service these men have rendered. They need your prayers and so do nurses, that we may give patient, loving and skilful service. We feel it a privilege to help even in a small measure. Then there is always a bright side-many making marvellous recoveries, and every week some ready to be sent home. Then they all so appreciate our work. Will you accept and give to Mrs. Worboys and family and the church people my kindest regards and loving Xmas wishes. Sincerely your friend, - ELSIE (Nurse) DEAKIN.
Elsie may not have known it, but at the time the letter was published, she was probably on board ship headed for a posting with No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield. Although this was the only one of her letters that appeared in a publication covering the Darebin area, there were several others written to her mother in Healesville that appeared in the Healesville and Yarra Glen Guardian including one written composed in January, 1916 when she was aboard a hospital off Mudros immediately following the evacuation from Gallipoli, but it didn’t find its way into the Guardian until May, 1918!

The addressee of the letter, "Mr. Worboys" was actually the Rev. James Worboys who had been pastor for three years of the Fairfield Baptist Church in Arthur Street to which Elsie Deakin belonged before he was transferred to Brunswick in April, 1918. He was president of the Fairfield branch of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare League at the time of his departure.

Casualties

Depending on the source, either 21 or 22 Australia nurses died in service - the Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services lists 21, but for some reason omits one of the most senior, Matron Jean Miles-Walker, Royal Red Cross First Class.

Based on the latter figure, seventeen were with the AANS, two were attached as staff at one of the General Hospitals, two were on Home Service and one was listed as part of the Australian Army Medical Corps.

None of the nurses die as a result of enemy action; all died of disease - the Official History attributes ten deaths to pneumonia, three from influenza. two to each of cholera and cerebral failure, while single deaths were attributable to malaria, enteric fever, meningitis and a septic infection.

Eight died in Australia, four in each of England and India, three in Egypt, two in France and one in Salonika.

(Whilst the number of nurses from New Zealand nurses that died on service is a little beyond the scope of this document, it is known that ten were drowned in October, 1915 when the British transport Marquette carrying a contingent of medical staff bound for No: 1 New Zealand Stationary Hospital was torpedoed in the Aegean Sea. A total of 36 nurses were aboard the vessel at the time)

The classifications as to cause of death, however, remain open to question, especially with the fine line between pneumonia and influenza.

At least three of those that are listed on the AWM Honour Roll, Nurses Rosa O’Kane, Doris Alice Ridgway, Ada Mildred Thompson died from influenza after volunteering for service at a Quarantine Station in Perth after the troopship HMAT Boonah arrived with over 300 hundred cases of the disease.

HMAT Boonah was the last Australian troopship to sail for the Western Front, leaving Fremantle on 29 October, 1918 with 918 servicemen on board.

She arrived in Durban on 14 November, three days after the Armistice and was recalled to Australia with tragic results.

On the return voyage, the Boonah made contact with another vessel and reported an increasing number of cases of pneumonia influenza on board.

By the time the ship reached Fremantle, the number was over 300 and Commonwealth immigration authorities initially refused to allow the servicemen to disembark until those known to be affected were transferred to a quarantine station at Woodman’s Point with an emergency staff boosted by 20 volunteer nurses.

The situation developed into both a medical and political nightmare; immigration officials continued to refuse to allow unaffected soldiers to disembark and tensions mounted to the point that the Returned Servicemen’s Association threatened to storm the ship to return what it termed “the prisoners” to shore.

The Boonah was eventually allowed to continued its journey some nine days later with another 17 cases detected before she reached Adelaide - in total, 27 servicemen and the three nurses died at the Woodman’s Point, later casualties from the voyage are unclear.

(Perhaps ironically, HMAT Boonah was a captured German vessel, originally known as s.s. Melbourne. The vessel was seized in Sydney just after the outbreak of war and was one of several German ships converted for troop carrying).
As for serviceman, however, the official World War One lists do not take into account those nurses such as the local Amy Simpson who died of war-related illnesses after the official disbanding on the A.I.F. on 31 March, 1921.

The Sinking of the RMS *Mooltan*

The casualty list of Australian nurses may well have been massively higher.

After picking up passengers at various ports, the 9,273 ton P. and O. steamer RMS *Mooltan* left Australia in mid-June, 1917, carrying nearly 300 mostly newly-trained nurses bound for Salonika and eight regular passengers en route to England.

The nurses disembarked at Port Said before the *Mooltan* continued its journey to England.

They boarded an alternate transport for Greece on 25 June and on the following day, the *Mooltan* was sunk by the German U-boat UC267 in the Mediterranean. The regular passengers and most of the crew were transferred safely to two Japanese destroyers, the *Kusonoki* and *Ume*, who after unsuccessfully searching for the German submarine landed those rescued at Marseilles. One Goanese crew member was killed and it was noted that the *Mooltan* was the seventh P. and O. liner to be lost to enemy action.

(It is not generally realised today that Japan sided with the Allies during the First World War - none of her ground troops were involved, but a number of Japanese Navy vessels escorted troop and regular mail ships to the eastern Mediterranean where they handed over duty to the Royal Navy).

Honours and Awards

There were two awards exclusively available to women nurses during the First World War - the Royal Red Cross First Class and Second Class.

Nurses could also qualify for honours and awards normally granted to servicemen, but the simple fact of being in non-combatant duties well behind the lines restricted such awards, although there are cases of nurses being awarded the Military Medal.

Somewhat more common was an official Mention In Despatches, one of which was award to Nurse Eliza Smith, the only instance of such a decoration to a nurse from the Darebin district.

Royal Red Cross (First Class)

The Royal Red Cross was inaugurated in the United Kingdom and British Commonwealth in April, 1883 by Queen Victoria for exceptional services in military nursing.

The award is for a fully trained nurse of an officially recognised nursing service who has either shown exceptional service over a period of time or who has performed some exceptional act of heroism at their post. The award was for females until 1976 when its scope was expanded to include male nurses.

The badge is in the shape of a golden Maltese cross approximately 3.5 centimetres high, enamelled red on the inner surface with a portrait of the reigning monarch and the word Faith, Hope and Charity on the upper three arms of the cross.

Recipients are entitled to use the post-nominal letters R.R.C. (Royal Red Cross) after their name.

There were 110 awards of the Royal Red Cross granted to Australian nurses in the AANS during the conflict.

Royal Red Cross (Second Class)

The Second Class (also known as the Associate Class) was inaugurated in 1917. The design in virtually identical to the First Class, but in silver rather than gold an maroon and blue ribbon rather than red and blue. Recipients are entitled to use the post-ordinals A.R.R.C. (Associate Royal Red Cross).

There were 304 awards of the Second Class to AANS members- there was no concept of a Bar to indicate a second award, many of those presented with the Second Class were later upgraded to First Class, although the latter could be made directly without the nurse-previously being awarded the Second Class honour.
Despite their names, neither award has any connection to the International Red Cross, although many of the nurses decorated did, in fact, later belong to that organization.

The major award of the International Red Cross is the Florence Nightingale Medal introduced in 1912, one of those nurses included, Edith Cromwell amongst the first Australians to receive the award. It is a civilian award and as such is worn on the right side rather than the left as is the tradition for military decorations.

**Medal of Military Merit (Greece)**

There were a number of foreign government awards available to Australian nurses, the most relevant being the Greek Medal of Military Medal.

The decoration was created by the Greek Nation Defence Government in 1916 for outstanding acts of ongoing service, or outstanding ability in management and organization of a military unit or office.

The Medal came in four classes, distinguished by a gilded laurel wreath at the highest level (illustrated), then silver and bronze, while the Fourth Class was plain.

The honour was awarded to eighteen of the Australian nurses that served at Salonika, but unfortunately the Australian War Museum's list of decorations does not disclose the class of any of the awards.

**And, of course, the Uniform ...**

... "the new military uniform for the nurses is very attractive. It is carried out in dark grey material, the bodice fastened down with oxidised buttons, the cuffs being of a chocolate colour. Embroidered on the sleeve is the Australian war badge, a little larger than a five shilling piece, in the centre of which is a red cross surmounted by a crown and surrounded with floral design picked out in fine silver wire, this replaced by silk in the case of the sisters. These will wear the decoration above the elbow, the matron displaying hers between elbow and wrist."

"All the staff will wear red military capes after the style of the English Army Nursing Sisters, but the Australian capes are a little longer, reaching almost to the waist, and are fastened at the throat with a silver brooch inscribed, "Australian Commonwealth Military Forces"."

"The costumes are completed with long grey cloaks and bonnets for outdoor wear. Beneath the grey brims of the bonnets, above an edging of white, is a narrow band of the chocolate material. This colour also appears on the cuffs of the sisters' dresses, not solidly, as in the case of the matron, but in two hands of narrow dimensions. The ward dresses are of grey zephyr, with which are worn cuffs, collars, and aprons of white, with red capes, and army caps of handkerchief shape. Each also wears on the arm a wideband of white, upon which the red cross is woven. This costume would be a most attractive one in which to dress dolls for sale for Red Cross purposes. Workers might bear this in mind".

The uniform varied during the war, depending on practical considerations such as climatic conditions and the description above appears to reflect a replacement for an earlier design (below).

The Defence Department did not provide the nurse’s uniforms.

The women had to acquire their clothing themselves and there was a controversy in 1915 over the costs of the uniform which was born by the nurses themselves after they received a grant of £15 for clothing. Several correspondents to the daily press pointed out that there were only two suppliers of the uniform in Melbourne - Lincoln Stuart & Co. and Ball and Welch - and depending on what accessories were required for travel and parade dress, the cost ran to well over £20.

There were also questions over the marketing tactics being employed and the matter was eventually raised in the Federal Parliament - both companies issued strenuous denials of overcharging, later substantiated by an official investigation by the Director of Stores. (David Jones & Co, in Sydney were also investigated and cleared).

The Defence Department was eventually pressured in August, 1915 into increasing the allowance on enlistment to £21 for overseas service or £19/10- for those in Australia (£16 and £12 as an annual renewal allowance), at the same time increasing the pay rates.

"When the Kyarra cast off, however, the guard relaxed its watchfulness, and the crowd was permitted to range itself for a few minutes beside the steamer, on which the grey and crimson of the nurses' uniforms contrasted becomingly with the khaki-clad doctors and the snowy whiteness of the transport".

The Argus, 5 January, 1915 on the departure of HMAT Kyarra with five hospital units bound initially for Egypt.
Local Care

5 Australian General Hospital (St. Kilda Road)

The major centre locally was the No. 5 Australian General Hospital in St. Kilda Road (generally known during the early years of the war simply as the Base Hospital) established in March, 1915 in buildings constructed the previous year on the site of a long-established Immigrant’s Home.

The complex was commissioned in January, 1914 at a cost of £6,066 by the State Government as a police hospital and stables, but on completion in mid-February, 1915 offered to the Defence Department for military use on the proviso that it would not treat cases of infectious diseases.

The building remains today as the home of the Victorian College of the Arts, heritage-listed on the south-western corner of South Bank Boulevard, originally Nolan Street.

On opening, there was a single medical officer, 8 nurses and 40 beds; by the end of the war, the staff included 17 full-time officers and 63 nurses serving 620 beds.

Patients from the Base Depot Hospital as 5 AGH, was generally known were transferred to Caulfield and Mont Park in September, 1918, the St. Kilda Road facility then used for special cases requiring isolation, out-patients, and, because of its central location, as an emergency ward.

11 Australian General Hospital (Kooyong Road, Caulfield)

This was supplemented by No. 11 AGH in Kooyong Road, Caulfield which appears to have catered for longer term patients.

The facility was established early in the war years and opened on 17 April, 1916, the former mansion Glen Eira converted into a Australian General Hospital (although usually known as Caulfield Military Hospital). There was a proposal post-war to convert its usage to that of an infectious diseases hospital, but it remained as a repatriation facility and permanent home for many disabled soldiers through to the end of the Second World War when it reverted to the civilian Caulfield General Medical Centre.

16 Australian General Hospital (Mont Park)

Our northern districts also came into play, the Shire of Heidelberg almost certainly unique outside of the capital cities of Sydney and Melbourne in having no less than four institutions catering for wounded or sick servicemen.

The Mont Park Hospital was established in 1910 as a mental facility, and late in 1914, an agreement was made with the Defence Department for the hospital to construct a new central block (sometimes referred to as “the Chronic Ward” for use as a military hospital, eventually known as the 16th Australian General Hospital.

The military section operated from 1916 with one wing set aside as a recovery centre from September, 1917 for what were rather unkindly called “bomb happy” cases, those suffering from shell shock and other traumas from which many never recovered. 14

This section of Mont Park was the first of the military hospitals to revert back to purely civilian use, the Defence Department relinquishing control from 1 August, 1921.
A further ward was constructed in 1919 to accommodate another 80 patients suffering from psychiatric conditions resulting from their war service. This continue to operate until 1933 when the remaining patients were transferred to Commonwealth facilities.

The hospital had a close association with the Preston branch of the Red Cross with many local women serving as volunteers at the hospital and a number of special efforts to raise both cash and other small luxuries of life for the patient were regularly noted in the Leader, including one campaign after those wounded at Gallipoli arrived home in the second half on 1915 to purchase a gramophone and records for the entertainment of those confined to the hospital.

The Mont Park spur

The establishment of the Mont Park facility led to the construction of the Macleod railway station, opening on 1 March, 1911 and the hospital eventually had its own spur line, although it was never part of the passenger network.

The track branched from Macleod station to serve the Mont Park Asylum complex, with the construction expense met by the government Health Department.

It opened soon after completion of the station and was a goods-only line - an Act was passed in 1946 allowing passenger services but these were never implemented. At the same time, it was suggested that a somewhat fanciful scheme for a railway from Alphington to East Preston would probably be extended through to Bundoora and Mont Park.

The Mont Park section was electrified in 1928, some five years after the main line then terminating at Eltham.

1 Australian Military Sanatorium (Macleod)

As part of the same complex, the Macleod Sanatorium (1 Australian Military Sanatorium) was constructed in 1915 for the treatment of tuberculosis patients, officially opening on 11 August, 1916. Again, this remained until 1933 when the Commonwealth Repatriation Department took over control of the remaining inmates.

After later extensions, Macleod was considered of such importance that it officially carried the title of 16 Australian General Hospital - the only one other than those established on the later Prince Henry’s site in St. Kilda Road and in Kooyong Road, Caulfield. It was the last site to be deemed an Australian General Hospital.

An Avenue of Honour of sugar gums was planted by inmates of Mont Park in 1919 to commemorate those that had died there; like many of its kind, the unmarked trees lost their significance until 1993 when the Macleod Progress Association uncovered the history of the Avenue and preserved it from a proposed sale and development of the land.

Bundoora Park and Homestead

After the war, the Commonwealth Government identified Bundoora Park estate and its 1899 Queen Anne style federation mansion and its grounds (formerly a leading thoroughbred stud in the 1880s and 90s), as a suitable site for a convalescent farm for the rehabilitation of ex-servicemen suffering psychiatric and behavioural disorders as a result of their military service.

In 1924, Bundoora took over from Mont Park as the repatriation and mental hospital for returned servicemen with an accepted psychiatric illness resulting from their war service, initially in the Great War and subsequently the Second World War.

A review of the repatriation hospital system in 1985, recommended extensive changes to the system under which hospital and medical care for ex-servicemen were delivered including a move towards decentralisation and integration of services.
As an result, the Bundoora hospital was formally de-commissioned after operating for just on 70 years as a repatriation facility and the remaining patients at Bundoora were transferred to alternative sites.

The grounds passed to the State-controlled Urban Land Authority with plans to demolish Bundoora Homestead along with all of the hospital buildings for residential housing, but through the combined efforts of Darebin City Council, La Trobe University and Preston Historical Society the building was saved. In 2001, Bundoora Homestead Art Centre was opened as a cultural and heritage facility for the community funded and managed by Darebin City Council.

12 Ward, Austin Hospital, Heidelberg

September, 1917 saw the establishment of a Military Section (later No. 12 Ward) at the Austin Hospital (still designated as the "Austin Hospital For Incurables", admission restricted to those considered terminally ill).

Several of the casualties listed in our Honour Rolls died from injuries or illnesses. Deaths recorded in Family Notices during 1918 and 1919 appear to relate primarily to those as a result of tuberculosis and gas poisoning rather than wounds, the symptoms much the same.

The Section comprised two wards which must have put significant pressure on the hospital as it was already being described as overcrowded. The wards continued to provide post-war care of servicemen hailing from the northern parts of Melbourne, particularly those with tuberculosis or other respiratory problems.

It may come as a surprise to many in our neighbouring suburb of Heidelberg to learn that their local Warringal Cemetery is officially classified as a Military Cemetery by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission with a small number of men that died at No. 12 Ward interred there.

Queen’s Memorial Infectious Diseases Hospital, Fairfield

Although it was never classified as a Military Hospital, the Infectious Diseases hospital at Fairfield was also used by the A.I.F. during the latter years of the war. 15

What is not clear is when the A.I.F. started to use the hospital and just what its official status was - with one exception (and that where the cause of death is somewhat clouded), all of the six men that passes away at the hospital in 1918 were suffering from cerebro-spinal meningitis after the hospital Board agreed somewhat reluctantly to accept a small number of cases of those suffering from the disease.

The hospital in all army records is shown simply as the Infectious Diseases Hospital at Fairfield without any indication of it being under A.I.F. control, but official statements from medical officers in the archives suggest that it was properly known as the Queen’s Memorial Infectious Diseases Hospital, a name it retained until 1948 when it officially became the Fairfield Hospital.

Some histories of the site suggest that Queen Victoria asked that funds raised during the Jubilee celebrations of her 60th year on the throne in 1897 to be help the sick.

Some £16,000 was raised by municipal levies in that year and the Victorian colonial Government granted 15 acres of land at Yarra Bend for the hospital, considered an ideal site isolated by the Yarra to the east and south and Merri Creek to the west. A Lunatic Asylum had existed nearby since the 1860s, the location selected for much the same reasons.

The hospital opened in 1904 with the funds for operations drawn from the Melbourne, Fitzroy, Brunswick Coburg, Richmond and St. Kilda councils. Each of these councils contributed to the upkeep of the hospital and had representatives on the Hospital Board, with ratepayers from their district entitled to be treated free of charge.

15 The “official” Infectious Diseases Hospitals under A.I.F. control in Melbourne where No. 5 A.I.. in Glenroy, opened in January, 1915 an closed in January, 1917 when it was supplanted by another hospital (undesignated) in Ascot Vale.
Other councils were required to pay for any of their residents who needed the use of the hospital and admission procedures required a written order from the Town Clerk of the municipality where the patient resided.

This arrangement caused something of a public outcry as one of the first six patients was a boy living in Northcote within a mile of the hospital who had contracted diphtheria and whose admission was delayed, some critics claiming that the Town Clerk of Northcote refused to agree to his admission as it was not clear who was to pay for the boy’s hospital fees.

An order for the boy’s admission was subsequently issued with the Town Clerk demanding an indemnity form be signed by his parents and doctor to reimburse the Council from any expenses and the boy was immediately removed to the hospital after a delay of five hours and operated on, but to no avail, the lad dying at 10 o’clock the same night.

(Northcote Council vainly tried to defend the actions of the Town Clerk, claiming that although the hospital had opened, the necessary forms for admission had not been received until after its previous meeting and that he had no power to act, two councillors in fact suggesting the matter was a ruse to force the Council to become a contributor to the financing of the facility).

Further public disquiet about the running of the hospital resulted in an inquiry being held in 1912 and an Act of Parliament was introduced in 1914 to establish a Board of Management and to have all councils contribute to the running of the hospital as well as providing funding from the State Government.

The Board was expanded in 1915 to include Northcote and Preston and minutes of Council meetings suggest Northcote share of the upkeep was £33 per quarter; Preston’s are noted alternatively as £12 or £15 while plans were also announced for a £25,000 upgrade of the facility (ultimately over £75,000 was spent).

In October of that year, the Board opposed suggestions that the hospital should accommodate cases of cerebro-spinal meningitis that had reached alarming proportions; it was noted that the Government and some 30 councils then comprised the Board. This was later overturned with the Government allowing special cases to be admitted with the proviso that patients could only be transported to the hospital’s own ambulances.

Oddly enough, all the deaths, both of servicemen and civilians noted at the hospital are recorded in Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages under Clifton Hill rather than Fairfield.

**Honour Roll : The City of Darebin**

**Harriet Mary Hazel Bain**

Address : 13 Darebin Street, Northcote

Next of kin : father, Mr John Bain (mother, Winifred Louisa, nee Jones)

Although the first in our alphabetical list, Hazel Bain was the last of the nurses connected to Darebin to be discovered, and more of the more significant in that she was the only one of the Darebin group that was forced to resign due to marriage while still serving. (Amy Simpson, later Cordingley married, but after her time with the Nursing Service had expired).

It was in fact a report in *The Argus* of the marriage of Staff Nurse Hazel Bain ‘eldest daughter of Mrs and Mrs J. Bain of Northcote, late of Romsey’ to Captain Alan E. C. McGavin that brought her background to light. The announcement of the marriage was unlikely to have caused any great surprise to family or friends in Melbourne- although the notice was published on 31 July, 1919, the ceremony actually took place on 9 March at Deolali, India, the services conducted by the Rev. Boats, military chaplain.

Just when Mr. and Mrs Bain moved into Northcote is uncertain - Hazel, then 27, enlisted late in June 1918 and embarked for Indian service from Sydney on 16 October, 1918, just three weeks before hostilities on the Western Front ceased, but many months before nursing services, especially in the sub-Continent were demobilised. Her father was then shown at “Grantham”, Moorhouse Street, West Richmond and may himself have been in the medical profession given the proximity of the address to the Epworth and Bethesda hospitals.

She had completed the three-year Certificate at the Austin Hospital and had served locally with the Australian Army Nursing Service before embarking. She disembarked at Bombay on 14 November and was appointed to the 34th Welsh General Hospital at Deolali, but in what appears to have been a whirlwind romance was forced to resign under the terms of enlistment with the A.I.F. just over three months later following her marriage. There was no Alan McGavin with the Australian forces; the assumption based on later evidence is that he was probably an administrator with the British Colonial Government.
Attempts to locate her as late as 1925 when her British War Medal remained unclaimed proved fruitless - John Bain had not advised his charge of address and mail to Moorhouse Street returned unclaimed. The couple remained in India and Second World War records show they had a 22 year-old son, Alan Stewart Denzil James McGavin born in Calcutta. He was serving as VX14106, Temporary Captain with the 14th Australian Infantry when he was killed in action in Papua New Guinea on 28 November, 1942.

An obituary revealed that he was educated at St. Edmund’s College, Hertfordshire, England, where he received his early military training and qualified for a commission from the Officers’ Training Corps. He was mentioned in despatches for distinguished service in Syria, and was at one point posted as Missing in New Guinea, but re-joined his unit two months before he was killed.

His parents were then living in First Street, Black Rock, his father noted as Mr. A. E. C. McGavin. M.B.E., J.P., ‘retired administrator and Judge of the Political Department of the Government of India’. When the family moved to Australia is uncertain, but there are strong indications it was only a year or two before the Second World War broke out, the report revealing that Alan junior had attended the local Duntroon Military College for a year before joining the A.I.F. in May, 1940.

Later In Memoriam notices placed annually by his parents suggest he was known as ‘Chummy’ and had a brother, Peter who was born in Hazaribagh, India who served as VX24412, Private also with the 14th Infantry. 16 National Archives also reveal that Alan senior twice offered his services to the A.I.F., but in what capacity and whether they were accepted is not stated.

Presbyterian, Hazel was born in Maryborough, remarkably as one of a family of eight sisters, two of whom died as infants. She died in Seaford in 1971 at 81 years of age, Alan pre-deceased her, dying in Mordialloc in 1970 at 86 years of age.

**Eileen Beagley**

Address : 2 Herbert Street, Northcote

Next of kin : father, Mr Richard Griffith Beagley, 2 Herbert Street, Northcote (mother Hannah "Annie", née O’Connell)

Eileen Beagley was just 23 when she volunteered for overseas service on 19 April, 1917, by some years the youngest of the group included. Her three year qualification for her Nursing Certificate was completed at St. Vincent’s Hospital.

She was one of the batch of Victorians that embarked from Sydney on 9 April, 1917 aboard *HMAT Ulysses* and like Elsie Fahey below, was assigned to the Croydon War Hospital until January, 1918 when she was transferred to the 1 AGH in France. The hospital unit appears to have returned to London in January, 1919 and continue serving there.

Details are not clear but she spent around three weeks in hospital prior to leaving England in March, 1919 and arriving home on 15 May. Her appointment was terminated on 29 June. Born North Carlton, Roman Catholic, died in St. Kilda, 1963 at 89 years of age

She had two brothers that served, 5032, William Charles Beagley who enlisted in October, 1914 as a Driver with 3 Light Horse Brigade Train and who was in England when the Armistice was declared awaiting his return to Australia for the six months Special Leave granted to men who had served four years; and 4658, Arthur John Beagley, Private, 23 Infantry who enlisted in February, 1916 and returned to Australia with a gunshot wound to the right leg in December, 1917.

**Evelyn Davies**

Address : Fairfield, Infectious Diseases Hospital

Next of Kin : mother, Mrs Alice Davies (nee Davies), "Fron", Healesville. Father George Meddins Davies (late)

Probably the longest continuously serving nurse from the district, her address on embarkation aboard *RMS Mooltan* with 3 Australian General Hospital on 15 May, 1915 was given simply as Fairfield where it was noted she had spent two years at the Infectious Diseases Hospital. Her three years of training to qualify for the Nursing Certificate were completed at Geelong Hospital and she was 31 on enlisting.

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16 Unfortunately, it is impossible from Army World War Two Nominal Rolls just who was the elder of the pair - Peter’s date of birth is shown as 25 March, 1920, Alan’s just four months later on 25 July, 1920!
She served initially with 3 AGH in Lemnos, but in July, 1916 was transferred to the British Indian Medical Service at the Station Hospital in Peshawar and later at the Victoria War Hospital in Bombay. In January, 1917, Evelyn Davies embarked for England where she served with the 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital before being sent to various units in France from January to December, 1918.

Then Sister Davies, she embarked for return to Australia on 20 May, 1919 after spending time in hospital with a sprained ankle and attending a training course at the Royal Sanitary Institute in London. She was discharged on 23 January, 1920 and when Service medals were being distributed in 1922, it was noted she was residing in Christchurch, New Zealand. Her promotion from Staff Nurse to came in March, 1917.

Born Healesville, Church of England, died in New Zealand in 1965 at 79 years of age. Her mother’s maiden name is confirmed as also being Davies by four other births under that name.

The Healesville and Yarra Glen Guardian noted a Welcome Home for Sister Davies and around 30 returned servicemen on 19 June, 1919 with 500 local residents in attendance and a further presentation at the railway station on 12 July when she returned to her place of birth. Her service was honoured on the Board at the local Memorial Hall (the only woman amongst 186 men) and at the Healesville State School.

**Elsie Longmore Deakin**

Address : 114 Station Street, Fairfield

Next of kin : mother, Mrs Janet Deakin (nee Longmore), 114 Station Street, Fairfield, father, Thomas Henry Deakin

Elsie Deakin enlisted at 35 years of age on 10 May, 1915 and served locally before volunteering for overseas duty on 9 August, 1916. Her three years of training were completed at the Melbourne General Hospital.

She embarked just over a week after volunteering on the 22nd with the same group as Gladys Sumner, but with the higher rank of Sister. On arrival in India, was appointed to the Victoria Hospital, Bombay until January of the following year when she was transferred to England and a Military Hospital at Bagthorpe.

In August, 1917, Sister Deakin transferred to the 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital. In January, 1918, she was transferred to 25 (British) GH in France but returned a few weeks later to England and the 1 AAH after suffering a seriously strained left ankle. She returned to France post-war and served another four months before being returned to Australia in May, 1919. Her appointment was terminated as medically unfit on 9 June, 1919. Born Emerald Hill (South Melbourne), Baptist, died in Elsternwick in 1969 at 88 years of age.

**Ernestine Mabel Edwards**

Address : ‘Hopetoun’, James Street, Northcote

Next of Kin, father Mr Ernest George Edwards, 67 Grey Street, East Melbourne, mother Marion, nee Mark.

32 years of age when she enlisted on 22 August, 1916, Staff Nurse “Nesta” Edwards boarded SS Karoola on 25 April 1917. After disembarking in England some two months later, she proceeded to join the 25 (British) GH in France, where she served more or less without incident until October, 1918. She then serve with 3 CCS in October, 1918 before being returned to England with influenza in November. Following the cessation of hostilities, she serve briefly at 2 AAH and 6AAH Holland Park. She arrived back in Australia in mid-July, 1919, then as Sister Edwards after being promoted 1 June and discharged on 15 October.

A letter in her files from an Isobel Arnold in Camberwell (who appears to have been her employer when she enlisted) dated February, 1918 revealed that Edward’s father had died some four months after she embarked, that her only brother was on active service and that she (Arnold) was then administering Nurse Edward’s affairs locally.

The brother was Charles Frederick, married and living at Orbost, but with his wife Lilian listed at 27 Herbert Street, Northcote. He served as 3061, Private, 38 Battalion and returned in December, 1918 suffering a wound to the right eye.

She was noted as originally being educated at Westleigh College in Northcote with medical training at Melbourne Hospital and Queen’s Hospital, Adelaide. In 1922, she was noted as being at Durban, South Africa where she remained until March, 1947 when she returned to Melbourne. Born Snake Gully, Ballarat, Methodist, died in Ivanhoe, 1959 at 76 years of age and was interred in Fawkner Crematorium.
Elsie Lena Fahey

Address : 32 Wood Street, Preston

Next of kin : father, Mr Stephen Andrew Fahey, at 32 Wood Street, Preston. mother Johanna, nee Fahey.

Staff Nurse Elsie Fahey was one of the younger women to enlist at 26 years of age. She had spent her three years in training at Maryborough Hospital, and like Ernestine Edwards appears to have spent some time with the Army Nursing Service before officially volunteering for overseas service on 27 April, 1917.

The lack of suitable transport meant she had to travel to Sydney to embark on the regular troop carrier HMAT Ulysses - of around 30 nurses that embarked, more than half were from Victoria, and around 80 servicemen were also taken on board.

On arrival in England in July, she was attached to the Croydon War Hospital until February, 1918, when she transferred to the 2 AAH and proceeded to France a couple of months later where she served at 74 (British) GH at Trouville until April, 1918; then at the Australian Flying Corps Hospital at Tetbury in England until October.

She served in England with 2 AAH until being repatriated home as one of the later arrivals on 1 August, 1919. Elsie worked at the Caulfield Military Hospital until at least 1921 when she applied for replacement for a lost medal.

Her history then takes a quantum leap in time with a letter in 1936 from her in New York thanking Base Depot for supplying her Victory Medal "... no doubt you think I'm rather late claiming it, but being so far away, one is apt to become careless about such things ...". This was followed two years later by a request for official records of her time in the AANS - her address then 647 Madison Avenue, New York; the details required as she was seeking work in the U.S. She is believed to have moved to the U.S. in 1930 and was naturalised there in 1935. Born Horsham, Roman Catholic, died in New York, 1965, 75 years of age.

Victorian Birth records confirm her mother’s maiden name was also Fahey (on five registrations), her parents probably cousins. The Leader in 1918 ran many advertisements placed by a Miss K Fahey (although shown as Catherine in Birth records) at the Wood Street address as a teacher of pianoforte and music, the notices revealing she had been educated at Trinity College in London as well as the Conservatorium of Music as the University of Melbourne.

Winifred Jeffreys

Address : Methodist Parsonage, Regent Street, Preston

Next of kin : father, Rev. John A. Jeffreys, Methodist Parsonage; Regent Street, Preston, mother Janette K Jeffreys (maiden name unknown)

At 26 years of age, Winifred Jeffreys first enlisted on 30 October, 1916 after spending 16 months on local duty with 5 AGH in St. Kilda Road. Rather than the AANS, she was initially assigned to the Hospital Transport Corps (HMAHS Kanoura) and spent around eleven months travelling between Australia and England. She was struck off the ship’s strength in October, 1917 and enlisted in the AANS. On arrival in England in February, 1918, she was assigned to 1 AAH at Harefield where she remained until February of the following year when she returned home.

She had an elder brother, Leslie Gordon Jeffreys killed during the conflict. Leslie was a professional soldier based in Queensland when he enlisted. In one of the more bizarre cases, the Methodist Church in Preston had planned a service to honour eight of their congregation that had died in service with the Rev. Jeffreys to officiate, but he received notice of his son’s death just a few hours before the service was to commence and understandably stood down.

Another brother, John enlisted and returned safely. There is no indication of Nurse Jeffreys movements after the war - the Rev. Jeffreys was transferred to Clunes via Creswick in April, 1918; receipts for her war medals distributed in 1921 have his signature as witness to their receipt.

Her name is included on the Preston Cenotaph and she appears to have been the only woman other than Vera O’Grady acknowledged on a memorial in the Darebin district. Born Paddington, N.S.W. (birth records in N.S.W. do not show maiden names), Methodist, date of death unknown.
Minnie Knight

Address : ‘Brightlea’, Murray Street, Thornbury

Next of Kin : sister, Mrs Henry A. (Mark) Hall, Murray Street, Thornbury, father Edward, mother Maria E Knight (nee Bayliss).

The English-born Minnie Knight enlisted at 34 years of age on 26 April, 1917. She was another that noted Home Service with the Nursing Service and like several others, travelled to Sydney to embark on HMAT Ulysses on 9 May. She had three years training at the Austin Hospital and after landing in England followed a well-trodden path in being assigned to the Croydon War Hospital and from January, 1918 to the 1 AAH. She later served with 1 AGH at Rouen, France from March, 1918 and later back in England at 1AGH Sutton Veny after the unit returned from France.

There is a possibility that she may have volunteered earlier and been rejected - National Archives contain an alternate series of files "MT1486/1 - Applications to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force" which in the majority of cases refers to those men and women that volunteered, but were rejected for reasons which are not specified. In most cases of servicemen, the specific year is listed, but in Minnie Knight’s case is shown as 1915-18.

From the research into around 6,000 volunteers from the northern and north-eastern districts of Melbourne, between 8 and 10 percent of these re-applied and were later accepted - in some cases because of remedial medical (especially dental) treatment; in others for men, through the reduction in the minimum acceptable physical standards as recruiting numbers fell away.

Minnie Knight’s circumstances remain unknown : her Attestation in response to the question “Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty’s Service?” is answered “No” - but then again, so that was the response of most of the men later re-applying and ultimately accepted!

She was one of the last to return, embarking on 4 June, 1919 with the rank of Sister after being granted two months leave to complete course in Sanitation at the Royal Sanitary Institute. Her appointment was terminated on 31 October.

Minnie Knight was another that did not claim her medals for many years, in her case 1934, suggesting the reason she had not received them earlier was that she had been away when they were delivered. She was still at the Murray Street address at that time. A letter in her file extends the possibility of her still living locally to 1956, when it is noted that a 1914-18 War Medal in her name had been forwarded by the Fairfield branch of the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. via Albert Park Barracks to Canberra for identification.

Born Birmingham, England, she migrated to Australia in 1890 at six years of age accompanied by her mother Maria, her grandmother, also Maria and two siblings, Charles and Mary, later Mrs Henry Hall. Her father was not shown in immigration records. Congregational, died in Canterbury, 1969, aged 79 years. Her mother in Death records is shown as murdered.

Her Death records is shown as Gwendolyn.

Florence May Laity

Address : Godfrey Terrace, Leabrook, South Australia

Next of Kin : mother, Mrs Susan Lamont Laity (nee Mackay), father John Henry Laity

Florence Laity is perhaps the odd-one out in our Roll. She enlisted at Keswick in South Australia with a residential address also in South Australia where her family appear to have been since about 1893, but she was born in Northcote on 20 May, 1888 when the family was in Barry Street (her father, John Henry was listed for several years as a partner in the firm of Laity and Wheat, architects, in High Street, then unnumbered but mid-way between Westbourne Grove and Hawthorn Road).

Staff Nurse Laity enlisted at 28 years of age on 26 June, 1916 with her Nursing Certificate earned at the Adelaide Children’s Hospital. She appears to have served locally before embarking on HMAT Themistocles in Sydney on 19 December, 1916, arriving in England on 2 March, 1917 after a stopover in Egypt.

Her career differed somewhat from the norm as she was sent to France a week after disembarking without serving in a hospital in England beforehand. She also spent much of her time with British units - initially No. 10 British Stat Hospital at Rouen, from July, 1917 with 25 General Hospital from July, 1917, and after being hospitalise herself with influenza, from August, 1918 at No. 48 British CCS. On return to England, she was assigned to a General Hospital (the location of which remains unknown) and served there except for a couple of brief admissions as a patient with bronchitis until March, 1919. She was promoted to Sister on 1 October, 1918. After the month’s Leave granted to all nurses, Sister Laity served briefly at No. 2 AAH until embarking for return to Australia on 20 June, arriving 6 August and being demobilised on 5 October. Born in Northcote, Church of England, died 17 June, 1947 at 59 years.
She had a younger brother, Henry Mackay Laity, just 20 years old who embarked as Company Quarter Master Sergeant with 4 Australian Army Service Corps, was awarded the Military Cross and returned in May, 1919 with the rank of Captain. He was shown as being born in North Adelaide in February, 1894, obviously just after the family moved from Northcote.

**Thora McLennan**

Address : care of Mrs Kenneth Jacobi, 91 Pender Street, Northcote (her sister, Amelia)

Next of kin : mother, Mrs Margaret McLennan (nee Rees), care of Mrs Kenneth Jacobi, 91 Pender Street, Northcote, father George Ross McLennan (late)

Thora McLennan was 32 years of age when she enlisted, She had completed her three years of training at Nhill Hospital and had previously run her own Private hospital in Nathalia from August, 1914 which she sold in December 1915. She embarked for Egypt via RMS Mooylana on 26 June, 1917. After arrival in Cairo was transferred in August to Salonika where she served at the 60, 66 and 42 AGHs. Late in May, 1918, she was herself admitted into hospital suffering from malaria and she was repatriated back to Australia, arriving 1 September with a file note suggesting she would remain unfit for even light duties for at least three months, although she did not require hospitalisation.

After her return, she married Jack M. Millson, noted as a son of Mr. and Mrs. Millson (late of Albury), the wedding on 3 December, 1920 at the at Presbyterian Church, Ascot Vale. Her archives are the slimmest of any in the group and it appears that the British War and Victory Medals to which she was entitled were returned unclaimed to Base Depot in October, 1923. Confounding the issue further is that there is no record of her birth, although there are three siblings listed as born to George Ross and Margaret McLennan in Dimboola. Born Dimboola, Presbyterian, she died in Rockdale, N.S.W. in 1963, but further confusing her background is her father being shown in NSW deaths as Donald Ferguson McLennan.

Thora had a brother, Arthur, who enlisted from Queensland, but also gave their mother Margaret in Pender Street as his next of kin in Pender Street. He served as 4190, Private, 35 Infantry and returned in March, 1918 after being diagnosed with a heart condition.

"Local Girl Goes on Active Service"

"Nurse Thora McLennan, sister of Mrs. Lindner, of the cordial factory, Dimboola, sails next month for service abroad. Miss McLennan, had her name on the list of those willing to go, and has been called up. She was born in Dimboola, and went through her training course at the Nhill public hospital, under Dr Ryan. Since then she has had a private hospital at Cohuna, but latterly has done private nursing."

*Dimboola Banner and Wimmera Advertiser, 1 June, 1917*

**Amy Veda O'Grady**

Address : North Carlton

Next of kin : brother, Rev. James O'Grady, Roman Catholic Presbytery, Clifton Grove, Preston. Parents Daniel and Ellen O'Grady (nee Egan)

Amy O'Grady was the first of two women connected to the district to die in the service of her country during the War. The link appears to have been marginal at best, and although her brother, the Reverend Father James O'Grady was noted on several occasions as passing on the sad news to a local family of a son's sacrifice at the front, the *Leader* failed to make the connection and simply listed under its "Gallant Australians" column "Nurse A. V. O'Grady, Preston" based on the Defence Department's policy of identifying the locality of a casualty on the basis of the address of the next of kin rather than the serviceman/nurse themselves. 17

She enlisted on 10 August, 1915 at 38 years of age. Her attestation noted both parents were dead and next-of-kin was her brother, Father James Henry O'Grady of the Roman Catholic Presbytery in Clifton Grove, Preston where he was appointed from Brunswick in February, 1914. Her own address was listed simply as North Carlton.

Her application to join the Nursing Service reveals she had 13 years medical experience, her mandatory three years training at the Melbourne General Hospital with later qualifications from the Queen Charlotte Street Hospital in London. She was one of the first batch of 49 Australian nurses sent to India at the request of the Indian Colonial Government after an outbreak of cholera.

She died in the Sisters Isolation Hospital, Colaba, Bombay after contracting the disease, but no record remains of the period of confinement. Amy O'Grady was interred at the Sewree Cemetery, Bombay. One other Australian nurse, the Irish-born Sister Kathleen Power is known to have died in India the following

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17 This policy means that there are potentially other servicemen that die during the conflict and who resided in the Darebin district that are not included on our In Memoriam Roll - especially English-born men who had no next of kin in Australia an whose deaths were simply recorded under “England”.

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Darebin’s Great War : Women In Uniform | Honour Roll : The City of Darebin

19
day from the same disease; two others later after being returned to Australia. Her death is recorded on the Preston War Memorial. Born Castlemaine, Roman Catholic, date of death 12 August, 1916; aged 39 years.

**Mary Elizabeth Jane Roberts**

Address : 114 Westgarth Street, Fairfield

Next of kin : mother, Mrs Elizabeth Roberts (nee Couch), 114 Westgarth Street, Fairfield, father Thomas Frederick Roberts.

Mary Roberts enlisted 12 June, 1915 at age 42 and with some 15 years medical experience as a nurse, sister and theatre sister in both public and private hospitals after completing her three years of training between 1901 and 1903 at the Melbourne General Hospital. She embarked from Melbourne on board *RMS Morea*, 24 August, 1915 and served in Egypt until December, 1915 when she returned to Australia.

She was discharged from the A.I.F. on 17 January, 1916 and transferred to the Australian Military Force and subsequently served (briefly) at No. 5 AGH. in St. Kilda Road, and later 11 AGH in Caulfield.

She transferred in September, 1916 to 14 AAH at Mont Park and appears to have served there until the end of the war, although correspondence in 1920 regarding war medals again shows No. 11 AGH. Born Molesworth, Church of England, date of death unknown, but it is believe she was still nursing as the Melbourne Hospital in 1948 when she must have been in her mid-70s.

**Amy Alice Simpson (Mrs Robert Cordingley)**

Address : care of Mrs Walker, Patterson Street, Preston

Next of kin : Sister in law, Mrs G. Simpson, Geelong Hospital. Parents Robert and Mary Lily Simpson (nee Sutton)

Amy Simpson was just the second woman and one of the last entries on our Darebin In Memoriam roll and for all practical purposes, a fluke discovery when another project to match up names on the South Preston State School Honour Roll with their military history revealed an ‘A. Simpson’ on the Roll; this some years later identified as Amy and the only woman on the Roll.

On later investigation it was discovered that just the last page of 67 in her National Archive file gives a hint of her demise with notification that her husband, Mr Robert Cordingley was issued with a Memorial Scroll and Plaque.

She first enlisted on 15 August, 1915, giving her address as care of Mrs Walker, Patterson Street, Preston, although she seems to have been based in Geelong for some years. Amy was a sister of Lieutenant Colonel James William Simpson, one of the highest ranking officers from the district to have been killed in action. 18

The Simpson family were based in Garnet Street, Preston for many years, their father Robert a wheelwright in Plenty Road and a prominent worker in the local temperance movement.

Prior to enlisting, she had worked at Geelong Hospital for some years. A brief snippet in the *Geelong Advertiser* following the award of the Military Cross to her brother James suggested ‘he was “a son of Mr. R. Simpson, formerly of Geelong ... he followed teaching pursuits in Geelong”.

Her early history in the military nursing services is a little clouded. After enlisting in August 1915 and serving at the 5 Australian General Hospital in St. Kilda Road until April, 1916, and then at Caulfield Military Hospital from December, 1916. She re-enlisted on 21 February, 1917 in order to serve outside of Australia. Her military career was somewhat different than that of most the other local nurses that enlisted in that she appears to have exclusively served on the hospital ship *Kanoura* from 21 March, 1917 and spent most of the next eighteen months serving on the hospital ship ferrying wounded and sick servicemen back to Australia.

18 Major General Harold “Pompey” Elliot, in Darebin Street, Northcote when he enlisted was of a higher rank and is included in our In Memoriam Roll, but took his own life in 1931. His biographers attribute the suicide to depression following his war-time experiences, but it remains debatable whether he was a casualty of the war. As a Lieutenant Colonel, James Simpson shared ranking with Robert Gartside whose wife resided briefly in Cunningham Street, Westgarth, although it seems doubtful whether he himself live in the district.
On what appears to have been her seventh trip back home, Simpson was disembarked at Gibraltar with influenza and pneumonia. She was repatriated back to England and discharged. After spending six weeks in hospital, she was considered fit to travel, embarking January, 1919 for her final return to Australia. She was confined to hospital in Melbourne until late in 1919, her condition described as “breathless on exertion, easily tired, unlikely to improve”.

Then Mrs Robert George Cordingley, Amy died in a private hospital in Camperdown on 22 October, 1922. Although it was acknowledged that her demise was as a result of war service, her death came too late to be recorded on the AWM Honour Roll. Born Preston, Church of England, died Camperdown, 2 October, 1923 at 33 years.

Amy’s bereaved husband enlisted in December, 1914 as a 25 year-old blacksmith and carrier from Neerim South and served as 58, 2 Field Artillery Battery. He embarked in February, 1915 but returned from Egypt almost immediately and discharged as medically unfit with severe back pain - it is not clear whether it was through medical treatment that the couple met.

(On its first voyage back to Australia, HMAHS Kanourna originally carried 12 medical officers and nine nurses; after re-fitting in August, 1917, the nursing configuration was changed to a matron, eight sisters and twelve nurses - the number of medical officers was not revealed).

The youngest sibling of the family embarked as 2893, Private Edgar Robert Simpson on 10 September, 1915 with 5 Infantry Battalion and returned March, 1918 suffering from a heart irregularity. The Mrs G. Simpson noted at Geelong Hospital as next of kin on Amy’s Attestation was James’ wife Grace, also a nurse at the hospital.

**Eliza Smith**

Address : ‘Fallowfield’, Perry Street, Alphington

Next of Kin : mother, Mrs Emma Jackson Smith, Birmingham, England

Eliza Smith enlisted on 3 August, 1917, giving her then-address as Bayswater. She served with the 19 (British) General Hospital in Egypt, but when on leave in England in January, 1918, she contracted bronchitis and was returned to Australia. She served at 16 AGH at Mont Park from April, 1918 until being discharged on 24 January, 1919. Despite a medical examination at the time of her discharge ruling she was only 75% capable of performing her normal nursing duties, she managed to re-enlist for duty on HMAHS Karoola giving her address as c/- Mrs Clough in Perry Street, Alphington.

She made one trip to England and while waiting return, suffered a relapse and applied for and granted permission to be discharged in England so she could return to her family in Birmingham. Born Birmingham, England, Church of England, her date of death is unknown, as is whether she ever returned to Australia.

**Gladys Nettska Sumner**

Address : 255 Clarke Street, Northcote

Next of kin : brother, Claude Sumner, 255 Clarke Street, Northcote. Parents Sydney Frederick (late) and Nettska Jean Sumner (nee McIntosh)

The London-born Gladys Nettska Sumner, aged 28, enlisted on 6 August, 1916 as a nurse with the AANS and was assigned to the British Indian Service following a request from the Indian Government for assistance in combating a cholera outbreak. Prior to embarking, she had served 12 months at the Base Hospital in St. Kilda Road after completing her three-year Certificate a Mooroolbark Hospital in 1918. She embarked as a Staff Nurse aboard RMS Mooltan on 26 August, spending around 10 months in India, before transferring to Salonika, tending British troops sent to support the Greek government against an advance by Bulgarian forces. She returned to Melbourne in June, 1919, after, according to the Leader on 6 June, 1919, suffering 28 attacks of malaria.

Claude was also English-born, two years younger than Gladys, and a younger brother born in Australia, Roy Gordon enlisted and died of gas poisoning at the 53rd General Hospital, France on 26 March, 1918.

Immigration records suggest the family arrived in November, 1890 when Claude was six and Gladys four. Their father was shown as Frederick and 29 years of age, and his father in turn, Joseph as 56. In response to the usual query from Base Depot as to whether she was “the nearest blood relative” following Roy’s demise, Mrs Sumner suggested “his father is many years dead” - she is shown in some registrations as Gladys Jean, but Nettska on arrival in Melbourne. Archives do not reveal where Gladys Sumner completed her training. Born London, Presbyterian, died at Dromana, 1970 aged 83 years.
Nance O’Carrol Walsh
Address: Heidelberg Road, Fairfield
Next of Kin: sister Mrs Mary Teague

Nance Walsh’s connection to the district was purely through that of her sister who was nominated as next of kin and she possibly never set foot in Victoria, let alone our local district. Born at Scariff, Ireland, she gained her Nursing Certificate at Perth Public Hospital and had also spent a year in surgery wards at the Adelaide and Fremantle Hospitals before enlisting in Fremantle at 26 years of age on 14 June, 1915.

Nurse Walsh was one of the earliest of those included to embark, departing Fremantle on 24 May, 1915 and served initially in Egypt before proceeding to France in April, 1916 where she served with 1 Australian General Hospital at Rouen. She was promoted to Sister on 1 September, 1917 and admitted to hospital herself while on furlough in England in January, 1918 before returning to France a month later.

She arrived back in Australia via HMAT Ulysses on 24 February, 1919 on special Leave and was formally discharged on 25 November, 1919, but unlike many of the other nurses, her archive show nothing of her life after she disembarked and there is no trace of a marriage or death (up until 1971) in on-line Western Australian indexes.

Ruby Emily Olive Wilson
Address: Kerrisdale, Victoria
Next of kin: mother, Mrs Catherine Wilson (nee King), 102 Rossmoyne Street, Northcote (father Thomas)

Ruby Wilson’s address was given as Kerrisdale (on the Goulburn Valley Highway) when she enlisted on 31 October, 1917, with her mother as next of kin in Northcote. She was 31 and had completed her three years at the Melbourne General Hospital.

She enlisted on 31 October, 1916 and joined HMAHS Kanowna in Sydney on 8 November. She appears to have completed two round trips as a Staff Nurse on the ship before re-embarking for England on 22 December, 1917 on HMAT Ulysses.

Her time in the military was almost identical to that of Winifred Jeffreys - after serving around 12 months on hospital ships, they embarked at the same time, both were assigned to No. 1 AAH at Harefield in England, both returned via SS Lancashire in February, 1919, and, sadly, both lost a brother during the war. Born Whittlesea, Church of England.

The only variation was that Ruby served at the Mont Park Hospital before enlisting. She had a brother Norman Claude who served with the 8th Light Horse in Palestine, but after being wounded at Gallipoli, he spent most of the next two years in hospital with a variety of illnesses; diarrhoea, dysentery, conjunctivitis, eczema and blepharitis (severe inflammation of the eyelids). His final admission was to the French Hospital in Damascus on 13 October, 1918 (despite the name, the hospital was briefly under Australian administration when Wilson was admitted). He died five days later, the rather unusual cause given as “malignant malaria”.

Born Whittlesea, Church of England, she died in Camberwell in 1963, aged 73 years.

To date, we have listed nurses in alphabetical order, but it is perhaps fitting that we leave possibly the most outstanding individual from the district to last.

Edith Cornwell, (R.R.C)
Address: “Cleadon”, 81 Westgarth Street, Northcote

As Matron Edith Cornwell and at 47 years of age (possibly 48 when she joined a second time), she was the most senior of the women from the district to enlist, both in terms of rank and age. Her initial training was at the Alfred and Women’s Hospitals and when she first enlisted in January, 1915, she was Matron of the Osborne House Hospital in Geelong.
The first of the local nurses to embark, she embarked as Matron with 1 AGH on the hospital ship *Kyarra* and on arrival in Egypt was appointed sub-matron of No. 1 Auxiliary in Heliopolis and later as Matron of No. 2 Auxiliary at Atelier. Her next of kin was then given as a sister, Mrs H. (Isabella) Norman in Waverley Road, East Malvern, also shown as her own address.

Matron Cornwell returned in February, 1916 and transferred to Home Service at 5 AGH, but on 27 April, 1917, she re-enlisted perhaps a little coy or wary about her age, she now claimed to be 44 years, with her brother Alexander in Westgarth Street as next of kin and as her own address.

This Attestation confirmed her three years mandatory training at the Alfred Hospital, but an alternative form specifically requiring details of earlier medical experience reveals she had held positions of Sister and Matron for 14 years, had been superintendent of the Royal Women’s Hospital and in charge of other private and public hospitals where no surgeon was resident.

She was embarked as a Matron with No. 1 AGH reinforcements in Sydney on *HMAT Ulysses*, and like several others in the group was first assigned to the Croydon War Hospital and then as Matron with 1 AGH at Rouen, France, although the latter transfer was delayed until February as she spent in Southwell Hospital with an unknown illness.

In 23 February, 1917, she became the only woman from the district to receive an official award, the Royal Red Cross (Second Class) for her services in Egypt. She continued as Matron of the 1 AAH until April, 1919 when she embarked to return to Australia. By this time, she had been awarded another Royal Red Cross, this time First Class (one of only 46 awarded in the AANS) gazetted in London on 1 January, 1919, in Australia 23 May.

Her contribution to the nursing profession continued for many years - post-war she became Matron of the Caulfield Military Hospital and later of Returned Soldier’s Sanatorium at Wentworth Falls in New South Wales before serving ten years as the Matron of the Child Welfare Depot in Royal Park (formerly the Neglected Children’s Home).

It was during the former assignment that she suffered the rather tragic loss of her two Red Cross awards - they were lost in a robbery where trunks containing war bonds to the value of £195 and deposit slips for other investments held in various banks in Melbourne, but it was the loss of the Badges that appears to have caused her the most distress.

Matron Cornwell was awarded the Florence Nightingale Medal by the International Red Cross in Geneva. The Medal was awarded in June, 1933 for outstanding services to nursing in both war and peace time and was presented with the award in September by Lady Isaacs, wife of the Australian Governor General, Sir Isaac Isaacs. At the time, Edith Cromwell’s was just the 57th awarded and just the third to an Australian.

She is noted in a letter in 1936 requesting replacement of a stolen Returned Serviceman’s Badge on the stationery of the Edith Cavell Trust Fund and reveals that as well as being the incumbent secretary of that fund, she had previously been the founding President of the Returned Australian Nurses Club.

Matron Cornwell died on 26 May, 1955 at Heidelberg House, Heidelberg and was cremated at Springvale Crematorium, a letter from the Imperial War Graves Commission requesting details of her service before her ashes were inserted into a memorial wall.

She was survived by three sisters, Mrs Isabella Norman, Mrs Alice Cochrane and Mrs. Bessie Stone, while five other siblings pre-deceased her - Mrs Annie Adams and brothers Edmund, Harry, Frank and Alexander. Victorian registrations place her as being born in Melbourne in 1868.

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19 With the first convoy in October, 1914, the *Kyarra* was listed as a hospital ship, but was not fitted out to treat patients, just to ship hospital units to Egypt. She was again converted in March 1915 into a troop transport and later was sunk by the German submarine UB57 submarine in the English Channel, 26 May 1918 with the loss of six lives. The wreck was not discovered until the late 1960s.
Her father Henry was noted as passing away on 27 May, 1915 at the Westgarth Street address, the Leader suggested he was “an old pioneer of the state and a useful, energetic and esteemed citizen of Northcote for many years ... the existence of the rockeries which beautified the entrance to the town was due in greater measure to no man than to the late Mr. Cornwell”.

An earlier edition noted that one section of the rockeries was named after him, the other notables so honoured Messrs. Bastings, Candy, Clauscen, Dennis and Mitchell. Cornwell was a prominent member of the influential South Northcote Ratepayer’s Association, but it is not clear whether he ever served as a Councillor.

In Voter’s Rolls for the first Federal Election in 1903, Henry was shown at 49 Westgarth Street with his occupation listed as “independent means”, but he is known to have been a builder who appears to have retired when he brought his family to Northcote from Bennett Street, North Fitzroy around 1898. He was still at 49 Westgarth Street when he passed away, Alexander at number 81.