

Gertrude Farrell (1884 – 1937)

Gertrude Farrell worked at a British hospital in Bombay. The Indian climate was very bad for her health and she was subsequently invalided home. She was tragically struck by a car and killed while walking across St Kilda Road.

Gertrude Farrell was born in Melbourne and was orphaned at the age of 11. Her father had been the licensee of the Station Hotel in Swan Street, Richmond.

In 1906 Gertrude received a Governor's prize for results she had obtained in her nurse training examinations. She completed her training at the School of Nursing at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne the following year.

Gertrude enlisted for overseas duty in 1918 and was posted to the Gerard Freeman Thomas Hospital in Bombay, India. This British Hospital received sick and wounded troops from the front in Mesopotamia, now Iraq. Many of the patients suffered from heat stroke, malaria or dysentery.

After six months, Gertrude began to feel unwell and was herself admitted to hospital. She was invalided back to Australia following a medical report stating "her health is liable to be seriously impaired by the climate of India".

Gertrude continued to work as a nurse following her return from the war, including at St Ann's Nursing Home in South Yarra.

On a Friday night in 1937, while walking across St Kilda Road in the central section where cars would not normally be driven, Gertrude was struck by a car and seriously injured. She died the next morning in hospital. The person driving the car was Aide de Camp, to the Governor. Vice-regal cars were not bound by the municipal laws prohibiting the use of the centre track by private vehicles. The City Coroner accordingly returned a finding of accidental death.

Members of the next generation in this family followed in the nursing profession. Two daughters of Gertrude's sister, Maisie, both undertook nursing training at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne Nurses Training School in the 1930s.



Service summary: Gerard Freeman Thomas Hospital (Bombay, India).

Graduated St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne: 1907

Enlistment: 1918

Final rank: Staff Nurse

Medals: British War Medal

Image source: Family collection, copied with permission of Suellen Oakley.

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