

Kathleen Smith (1885 – 1961)

Kathleen Smith was recommended for the Associate Royal Red Cross award for her “devotion to duty, long service, skill, energy and cheerfulness”. She treated casualties from the Gallipoli campaign and the Western Front in diverse postings including the Greek island of Lemnos, Egypt and France.



Following completion of her training, Kathleen worked as a surgical nurse in Gippsland and then at an invalids' home on Hoddle Street in East Melbourne.

Kathleen enlisted for overseas service and was posted to the No. 3 Australian General Hospital on the Greek island of Lemnos, where she nursed the many sick and injured casualties of the Gallipoli campaign.

Kathleen moved with the hospital when it was transferred to Egypt. Here she treated soldiers with war injuries, as well as diseases associated with the region, particularly malaria, dysentery and pneumonia. She went with the hospital when it transferred briefly to England and then to Abbeville in France, near Amiens and the Somme battlefields.

In 1917, Kathleen was attached to the No.1 Casualty Clearing Station at the front line in France. A Casualty Clearing Station was very close to the front line, receiving and treating battlefield casualties. Although

located just beyond the range of enemy artillery, this was very dangerous and relentless work. Following a short spell back in Britain due to health problems, Kathleen continued working in France. Promoted to Sister, Kathleen's surgical skills resulted in several new postings to surgical teams in British hospitals as well as the No. 3 Casualty Clearing Station at locations near the Western Front.

Transferred back to Britain after war hostilities had ended, and awaiting transport back to Australia, Kathleen took the opportunity to complete a midwifery course at the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin under the AIF Education Scheme. The AIF Education Scheme provided bursaries to members of the AIF, including nurses, for training leading to employment opportunities when they returned to the civilian workforce in Australia.

Kathleen's last posting was on her return journey to Australia on duty as Sister-in-Charge of the nursing staff on the troop carrier.

Kathleen was recommended for the Royal Red Cross (2nd Class) for her “devotion to duty, long service, skill energy and cheerfulness in her work” over 3 years and 8 months at Lemnos, Egypt, England and France.

Following her return, Kathleen started living and working at the Chelmer Private Hospital in St Kilda Road. She remained there until its closure in 1946, by which time she was the Matron. Following its closure, she continued to work in the building which was converted to professional medical rooms.

Where served: 1 AGH (Abassia, Egypt); 3 AGH (Lemnos, Greece); 1 CCS (France); 20 BGH (No. 1 Surgical Team, Étaples, France); 3 CCS (France); 39 BSH (Abbeville, France); Transport Ship ('Themosticles').

Graduation St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne: 1909
Enlistment: 1915
Final rank: Sister
Medals: 1914/15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal.

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