

Jessie Bassetti



Date/Place of Birth: 1881, Redfern, NSW

Date/Place of death: 30 October 1929, Rookwood Cemetery

Australian Army Nursing Service

Enlisted: 10 May 1917

Discharged: 3 November 1919

Biographical details

Jessie Bassetti was born at Redfern in 1881, the daughter of John Baptist and Susan Bassetti. When a child, her family moved to the Grafton region, settling at Lionsville, near Yulgilbar. Bassetti commenced nursing in Grafton under Dr Earle Page. Jessie undertook her nursing training at the Penrith Cottage Hospital. In 1913, the Nepean Times reported the results a second year examination in surgery. Students were asked a range of questions on subjects as diverse as disinfectants, bed sore prevention and treatment, after care of tracheotomy, preparing patients for general operations such as the removal of an appendix, identification of pressure points and arteries, and resuscitating a patient. Nurse Bassetti was placed fourth receiving a total of 90 for the practical exam and 93 for the vapour exam. In May 1917, Bassetti and Matron West notified the hospital board of their resignation and intention to serve overseas.

Military Service with AANS

Jessie enlisted in the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) on 10 May 1917 and was appointed a Staff Nurse. She left Melbourne aboard the RMS Mooltan, a mail steamer, along with Penrith nurses, Adele Baker, Esther Coggins, Vida Greentree, Ione Nowland, Alice Scahill and Annie Major-West, and 300 nurses bound for Salonika. The ship arrived at Suez on 19 July 1917 and the nurses travelled to Cairo via train. On 12 August 1917, Jessie embarked for Salonika aboard the Osmanich, arriving on 14 August 1917. On arrival, Jessie worked in British hospitals including the 52nd and 50th General Hospitals. In April 1918, Jessie was sent to the Sisters Convalescent Camp due to debility and resumed her nursing duties with the 50th General Hospital in May 1918. In December 1918, Jessie travelled to Athens for leave and rejoined the 60th General Hospital on her return. In February 1919, Jessie boarded the HMT Wyreema for England. From March 1919 until her return to Australia in July 1919, Jessie undertook a course in Domestic Economy at the Polytechnic in Chelsea. At its conclusion, Jessie received a certificate stating she had undergone a course in domestic subjects including the theory and practice of cookery, laundrywork and housecraft. On 8 July 1919, Jessie left England aboard the Friedrichsruhe and this ship also had on board Prime Minister Billy Hughes and Nurse Wilson, a former resident of Penrith, who after leaving Penrith entered the nursing service. The ship arrived in Australia on 4 September

1919. Her service with the Australian Army Nursing Service was terminated on 3 November 1919.

Following her discharge, Bassetti nursed at the Military Hospital at Randwick. She died on 30 October 1929 following complications with contracting malaria while on overseas service. She was buried in Rookwood Anglican cemetery.

Newspaper article refers to Nurse Bassetti

Nepean Times 15 November 1915, p5

Our Hospital [excerpt]: Following is a copy of the examinations, second year nurses in surgery have to go through, and the result of the first part of the examination gone through by nurses of the Nepean Cottage Hospital:- (1) Name ten antiseptic agents and the strength in which they are usually employed, (2) What treatment would you adopt for rigor (8 lines). (3) How would you prevent the formation of bed sores (12 lines)? (4) Describe the treatment of bed sores (10 lines). (5) Briefly state how you would prepare a patient for a general operation, eg appendicitis; including treatment of the skin, to take place at 10 am tomorrow? (6) What methods would you adopt to disinfect instruments (24 lines)? (7) Relate in detail the after treatment of tracheotomy (exclusive of feeding). (8) Question for prize – Give details of feeding of a tracheotomy – case, age 10 years.

To be done in Theatre – Select the instrument that you suppose might be required for an amputation of the leg just below the knee joint.

To be done in the Ward – (1) Put up a fracture of the left radius. (2) Demonstrate how to resuscitate a patient who has stopped breathing during the administration of an anaesthetic. (3) mark with a pencil the pressure points and recount the names of the arteries you reckon you place pressure upon.

Result 1, Nurse Baker, practical 92, vapour 99, total 191; 2 Nurse Scahill, 93, 95-188; 3, Nurse Greentree, 99, 88-187; 4, Nurse Bassetti, 90, 93-183.

Nurse Baker was the prizewinner. The marks obtained being very high all the nurses were congratulated by the committee. Dr Higgins, in speaking on the matter, attributed the success to having a highly intellectual matron.

Newspaper article refers to Nurse Bassetti

Nepean Times, 2 June 1917, p3 c6

Our Hospital – Correspondence [Excerpts]: Letter from Matron West, notifying her resignation of position in consequence of having been called up for service abroad.

From Nurse Bassetti, resigning her position for similar reasons. The Matron and Nurse Bassetti, sincerely desired to express their thanks to Doctors and Committee of the Hospital for past kindnesses while on the hospital staff.

In reference to resignations of Matron West and Nurse Bassetti, which were received with regret, it was moved by Ald Jones, and seconded by the Mayor, that advertisements be inserted in the Sydney morning dailies for applications from competent and qualified persons for the position of Matron and Sister.

On motion of Mr Mills and Mr H J Neale, it was decided to place on record the Committee's deep appreciation of the services rendered by Matron West and Nurse Bassetti to the hospital. On motion of Messrs Mills and Price, it was decided that Executive had the power to appoint Sister Greentree as Matron, temporarily, pending the appointment of a permanent Matron. We understand Sister Greentree is empowered to act until a permanent appointment is made. As Sister Greentree has also been listed for nursing service at the seat of war, she is precluded, we understand, from accepting the position of permanent Matron at the Nepean D.C. Hospital.

Newspaper article refers to Nurse Bassetti

Nepean Times, 13 September 1919, p3 c1

Returned Nurses: Several of the former nursing staff of the local hospital, who enlisted for service abroad, are once more in the land of the Southern Cross. Sisters Greentree and Bassetti returned on the Friedrichsruhe, the ex-German boat that brought our own Billy home on the same trip. Sister Major-West (ex-matron of the Nepean Cottage Hospital) and Sister "Dell" Baker returned last Saturday on the Orsova. It will be remembered that Sister West was recently decorated with the Royal Red Cross. She, with Sisters Greentree, Bassetti and Baker, had a lengthy experience with the army at Salonica. Nurse Wilson, formerly a resident of Penrith, who after leaving this district entered the nursing service, also came home on the Friedrichsruhe as a passenger.