

## Matron May Boland



*The Sun (Sydney, NSW) 24 July 1931 p10.*

May Alphonsus Boland, nurse and matron, worked at the Nepean (District) Hospital between 1929 and 1941. She was born at Upper Manilla, NSW, one of ten children born to Margaret and William Boland in 1893. At 13 years old, May Boland had an article published in the Catholic Press in 1906. Here she shows her leadership and community-minded qualities commenting that she will “try to arouse her friends” to contribute to the Press, and speaks of her town, Barraba, as a positive and developing community. (The Catholic Press 14/6/1906).

In 1911, May began her career as a probationer at Manilla Hospital. By 1915 she was working at the Coast Hospital (Prince Henry Hospital), in NSW. She passed her ATNA examinations in 1917, (membership of the Australian Trained Nurse Association conferred status upon nurses). After 6 years at the Coast Hospital May moved to Victoria to work and, where she caught Spanish Influenza. In 1923 she left Victoria, working as Matron “with the highest of qualifications” at Bundaberg Hospital in Queensland (Bundaberg Mail, Aug 1924). Here she prepared nurses for their A.T.N.A exams and supervised 40 staff. In October 1924, Boland sued James Burke Clark, the President of the Hospital Committee for assault, only withdrawing her complaint after Clark apologised. However, by 1925 May Boland had been dismissed by the Hospital Board, (Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs Gazette, Sept 1925). According the Queensland Times (September 1925) there was “considerable public indignation” as May Boland was “esteemed by patients, nursing staff, and public” and was dismissed “without giving a reason and withholding particulars of the proceedings from the Press”. May Alphonsus Boland was listed on the Register of Nurses 1927.

May then worked casually in Wollongong before taking up the position of Matron at Nepean District Hospital in late 1929. Boland not only managed and supervised staff; she was very involved in fund-raising in the community, helping to organise events such as the Hospital Comfort Club's garden party, the Mad Hatters' Ball and the Annual Ball with the Penrith Ladies Auxiliary. In 1931, May Boland was involved in a court enquiry which investigated the financial and administrative management of the hospital. Allegations were made against Matron Boland regarding petty cash. Dr. I. M. Barrow, who attended patients at the hospital, said that "Matron Boland was the best matron the hospital had ever had" and that she "conducted the hospital in a very efficient manner". (Nepean Times Aug 1931).

By 1937 Boland was a member of the Nepean District Hospital Board, which at the time, was pushing for a new hospital building. Matron Boland was heavily involved in fund raising for the hospital but by 1941 had resigned citing that she "could not transform an out-of-date building (hospital) into something modern". May Boland was given a huge farewell at Tattersall's Hotel. Not only was she regarded as an excellent Matron and leader by the hospital and community, she was also an excellent card player and golfer, winning the B-grade golf championship at Oatlands. (Nepean Times Sept 1938).

It is unclear where May Boland worked from 1942-1945, however she became Matron of the N.S.W. Society for Crippled Children, at Beverley Park Estate, Campbelltown in 1945, working there for about eighteen months (1945 Annual Report held at Northcott Disabilities). In March 1947, Boland worked at Westwood Sanatorium, near Rockhampton, Queensland, resigning in November 1947. Here Matron Boland was "seen to have been three of the most successful matrons at Westwood over its years of change". ("Story of Rockhampton Hospital and those other institutions administered by the Rockhampton Hospitals Board, 1868-1980 by D Cament and F Killion. p 35). During her time at Westwood, she wrote a letter to the Medical Superintendent to improve the hospital nurse wage rates (Rockhampton Hospitals Board minutes 21 November 1947).

Boland appears to have moved back to Sydney by 1948, living at 11 Alexandra Street Concord. May Boland died at only 60 years of age, in Western Suburbs Hospital and was buried in Rookwood Cemetery in August 1953.

## Reference

- Sydney Morning Herald 22 December 1917 p14
- Manilla Express 5 August 1911 p2