

Esther Edith Coggins



Date/Place of Birth: 1885, Waverley, NSW

Date/Place of Death: 1980 Auckland, New Zealand

Australian Army Nursing Service

Enlisted: 4 December 1916

Discharged: 13 September 1919

Memorial Details: Honour Roll Orchard Hills Public School, St Stephen's Anglican Church, Penrith

Biographical details

Esther Edith Coggins was born about 1885 at Waverley NSW, the youngest daughter of Thomas and Clara Sara Coggins. After her father passed away, Clara Coggins moved her family to a farm at Orchard Hills. Coggins completed her nursing training at the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children at Camperdown. During the war, her sister Clara was an active worker for the Orchard Hills branch of the Red Cross Society. Just before his sister enlisted, brother Herbert, was granted a short-term exemption from service in consideration of his responsibilities to his mother and three sisters. Esther's mother was living at the York Estate Penrith at the time of Esther's enlistment

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Military Service with AANS

Coggins enlisted on 4 December 1916 and was appointed as a Staff Nurse. In May 1917, she was given a surprise farewell party during which she was presented with a silver-mounted manicure set. She was praised for 'making a great sacrifice ... to do her duty to her country'. She left Sydney aboard the *RMS Mooltan* on 12 June 1917 along with Penrith nurses, Adele Baker, Jessie Bassetti, Vida Greentree, Ione Nowland, Alice Scahill and Annie Major-West, and 300 nurses bound for Salonika, Greece. They disembarked at Suez on 19

July 1917. On 25 July 1917, Coggins along with other Australian nurses embarked aboard the *Chagres* for the trip to Salonika Greece arriving on 31 July 1917. On arrival Coggins was appointed to the 60th General Hospital before being transferred to the 52nd General Hospital on 23 August 1917 and 50th General Hospital on 29 August 1917. Coggins remained at this hospital until 27 April 1918, when she was admitted to the Sisters Convalescent Camp suffering debility before being discharged to duty at the 50th General Hospital on 11 May 1918. On 7 July 1918, Coggins was transferred to the 42nd General Hospital before being transferred back to the 50th General Hospital on 9 September 1918. Coggins was hospitalised a week later with influenza and returned to duty at the 50th General Hospital on 26 September 1918. Coggins was granted 21 days leave to England in November 1918 and on 15 November, she entrained for Bralo and then embarked for Taranto on 22 November 1919. Coggins returned to Salonika aboard the *Eckatina* on 16 January 1919, resuming duties at the 50th General Hospital on 25 January 1919. On 25 February 1919, Coggins left Salonika aboard the *Gorgon* for the brief trip to Alexandria, and her eventual return to Australia. On 13 March 1919, Coggins embarked on the *HT Ulmarra* as part of the nursing staff. When the ship arrived in Sydney, it was placed in quarantine due to the worldwide influenza epidemic. During this period of quarantine, Coggins suffered an acute attack of appendicitis and was transferred to the 4th Australian General Hospital at Randwick where her appendix was removed. Coggins left the Australian Army Nursing Service on 13 September 1919. In 1924 Esther married Reverend Reginald Massey, Anglican minister at St James, Sydney. By 1930 they were living at St Paul's Rectory Ipswich Queensland. Massey died in 1960 and in the late 1970s Esther moved to the Auckland district of New Zealand where she lived with her son and family until her death in 1980.

Sources:

Australian War Memorial World War 1 Nominal Roll
NAA: B2455, COGGINS E E