

Vida Mitylene Greentree

Date/Place of Birth: 3 June 1890, Freemans Reach, NSW

Date/Place of Death: 1 Sep 1983, Sandgate, Qld

Australian Army Nursing Service

Enlisted: 24 May 1917

Discharged: 4 October 1919

Memorial Details: Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith, St Stephen's Anglican Church, Penrith

Biographical details

Vida Greentree was born on 3 June 1890, at Freemans Reach NSW, the second eldest daughter of Albert Charles Greentree and Jane Cameron (nee Hoskinson). After leaving school, Vida undertook her nursing training at the Nepean Cottage Hospital Penrith. 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 and preparing patients for general operations such as the removal of an appendix. Nurse Greentree was placed third receiving a total of 99 for the practical exam and 88 for the vapour exam.

Military Service with AANS

On 24 May 1917, Vida enlisted in the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) and was appointed a Staff Nurse. She left Melbourne aboard the *RMS Mooltan*, a mail steamer, along with 300 nurses bound for Salonika. The ship arrived at Suez on 19 July 1917 and the nurses travelled to Cairo via train. On 8 August 1917, Vida embarked from Alexandria on the *Huntsgreen* for Salonika and arrived on 13 August 1917. Conditions in Salonika were less than ideal for the nurses. On 19 August 1917, shortly after Vida's arrival at Salonika, almost 2/3 of the town was destroyed by fire and which left 25,000 people homeless. Food supplies were sent from Egypt and often failed to arrive due to the ships being sunk.

Vida was posted to the 60th General Hospital (British) situated at Hortiach up in the hills above Salonika. According to an interview conducted with Matron Adelaide Kellett in 1919, the hospital was "a large tented hospital with 1600 beds. I was in the surgical ward. The cases were not severe being principally hernia...The wards were not well equipped for surgical work. We found great difficulty in sterilizing our instruments." The 60th General Hospital moved to Lembert, about three kilometres from Salonika. During her time at this location, Vida nursed German, Bulgarian and Turkish prisoners of war. Some of them were severely wounded, and as few prisoners spoke English, it was often difficult for the staff to manage their care.

In April 1918, the hospital moved back to Hortiach. In November 1918 Vida was transferred to the 50th General Hospital. During this time many of the hospital's patients were victims of the influenza epidemic which was raging through Europe. In December that year, Vida left for two weeks leave in Athens. In February 1919, Vida embarked for England aboard

the *HMT Wyreema*. Vida served with the 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford until returning to Australia aboard the *Fredrichsruhe* on 4 September 1919. Vida was discharged on 4 October 1919.

Vida Greentree returned to Freemans Reach and held the position of postmistress for many years. On 12 June 1965 Vida's service to the Freemans Reach community was acknowledged when she was awarded the Order of the British Empire – Medal (Civil)/British Empire Medal (civil). Vida Greentree never married and died in Brisbane on 1 September 1983, aged 93 years.

Sources:

Australian Honours List:

<http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au>

Australian War Memorial World War 1 Nominal Roll

AWM41: 1072 Interviews containing accounts of Nursing Experiences in the AANS. These nurses were interviewed by Matron Kellett [V M Greentree]

NAA: B2455, GREENTREE V M

Newspaper article refers to Nurse Vida Greentree

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 Greentree

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 Greentree

Windsor and Richmond Gazette, 26 August 1919

Nurse Vida Greentree: Coming home about August 22, after two years noble service at the war – Nurse Vida Greentree, daughter of Mr and Mrs Al Greentree, of Freeman's Reach. Nurse Greentree has been nursing enemy wounded at Salonica, and was also on the staff of a big military hospital in London. Before going abroad she was head nurse at Penrith hospital and declined the matronship when it was offered to her. She was much loved by the hospital patients and the general public at Penrith. This brave Hawkesbury woman should get a dinkum reception when she arrives.

Newspaper article refers to Nurse Greentree

Windsor and Richmond Gazette, 12 September 1919

Nurse Vida Greentree: An exceptionally big crowd assembled at Windsor Railway Station on September 4, to welcome Nurse Vida Greentree, daughter of Mr and Mrs A C Greentree, of Freeman's Reach. Nurse Greentree saw a couple of years war, and was nursing wounded on the Salonica front, and at the conclusion of the war went to England and took up duty in a military hospital. The station was gay with flags and bunting for her return and the band played "Home, sweet home" as the train drew in. There was much cheering for the brave Hawkesbury girl. Mayor Ross, R B Walker MLA, Rev G A Hill, and A C Hannabus spoke and all referred to Nurse Greentree's fine work at the war. Mr Greentree thanked the people on behalf of his daughter for the fine welcome home. After more cheering the band marched

in front of the motor car conveying Nurse Greentree and her parents and played them up to the Post Office and after more cheering they proceeded home to Freeman's Reach.

Newspaper article refers to Nurse Greentree

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 *Friedricksruhe*, 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 Salonika. Nurse Wilson, formerly a resident of Penrith, who after leaving this district entered the nursing service, also came home on the *Friedricksruhe* as a passenger.