

Adelaide Maud Kellett CBE, RRC



Date of Birth: 1 September 1873 **Place of Birth:** Raglan, NSW

Date of Death: 12 April 1945 **Place of Death:** War Memorial Hospital, Waverley NSW

Australian Army Nursing Service

Enlisted: 10 September 1914

Discharged: 1 October 1920

Memorial Details: Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith ; Honour Roll, Presbyterian Church, Penrith

Biographical details

Adelaide Maud Kellett, born on 1 September 1873 at Raglan, NSW was the daughter of Charles Henry and Sarah Kellett (nee McClintock). The family moved to Penrith where they ran the Penrith Post Office for many years. After attending Penrith Superior Public School, in January 1898, Kellett entered Sydney Hospital as a probationer and was granted her nursing certificate in September 1901.

Military Service with AANS

In May 1908 Kellett joined the Australian Army Nursing Service. This was a voluntary position with a requirement that a specified number of hours of lectures etc would be attended each year. In October 1910, Kellett was appointed assistant to Rose Creal, matron of Sydney Hospital.

Adelaide Kellett joined the Australian Imperial Forces (AIF) in September 1914 as a Sister. On 15 October 1914, Kellett, a member of the first nursing contingent, left Australia aboard the Euripedes and served as the theatre sister aboard this transport. The ship stopped briefly at Colombo, then Aden before reaching Alexandria on 3 December 1914. Sister Kellett was allotted to Mena House, and was placed in charge of the operating theatre. On 19 January 1915, No 2 Australian General Hospital (2AGH) commenced operations at Mena House. Kellett remained at Mena House until 6 May 1915, when No 2 AGH relocated to the Ghezireh Palace. In September, Kellett was appointed to the hospital ship Gascon, used to transport wounded from Gallipoli to Lemnos. Kellett described a trip to Gallipoli: "Our orders arrived to proceed to Anzac Cove, which we reached the same evening, about six

hours trip from Mudros Harbour...our patients began to arrive about 6 pm, in barges, mostly medical cases...I feared from the terrible firing, especially about 3 am, there would not be a single soul alive, and was greatly relieved and surprised in the morning, when the barges arrived, to find so few wounded. Left Anzac Cove on the night of the 12th September 1915, reaching Mudros harbour early the next morning, put some of our patients ashore, and received our orders for Malta.” Other ports visited by Kellett while working on the hospital transport ships included Alexandria, Gibraltar, Salonika and England.

On 20 January 1916, Kellett returned to No 2 AGH and worked on night duty until appointed Temporary Matron of the Choubra Military Infectious Hospital on 8 February 1916. The Choubra Hospital, a semi-private Austro-Hungarian hospital prior to the outbreak of World War 1, contained about 400 beds. The facility handled infectious cases such as diphtheria, typhoid, cerebro-spinal meningitis, mumps, measles and dysentery. On 7 July 1916, Kellett in charge of forty five sisters, sailed for England. After a brief stay at No 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital (1AAH), Harefield, Kellett commenced duty at the newly formed No 2AAH, Southall on 6 August 1916. This facility, previously an orphanage, became the centre for amputee cases. On 23 February 1917, Kellett was awarded the Royal Red Cross medal for her special devotion in nursing the sick and wounded.

On 10 July 1917, Kellett was appointed Matron of the 25th General Hospital, Hardelot France. The hospital consisted of the building, previously the Hotel de Hardelot, and canvas tents. The facility was principally for the treatment of skin cases. In May 1918, Kellett took 14 days leave in Mentone and in September that year, also took leave in England. During the concerted Allied offensives of August and September 1918, the hospital also functioned as a Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) with theatres in constant use day and night. In February 1919, orders had been given to close the 25th General Hospital and Kellett was transferred to England. Matron Kellett was appointed from 26 March to 11 May 1919 to assist the collator of the medical history war records section in compiling the records of the Australian Army Nursing Service. During this period she interviewed the 128 AANS nurses, still in England at the time, awaiting transport to Australia. Kellett was mentioned in dispatches in 1916 and 1919 and was appointed a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) Military Division the same year.

On 28 August 1919, Kellett returned to Australia aboard the Kanowna arriving in Sydney on 26 October 1919. Her brother, Corporal Marshall Kellett, who returned to Australia on 1 June 1919 after three years' active service, was awarded the Military Medal for remarkable bravery under very trying conditions. Kellett was appointed Matron of No 4 Australian General Hospital Randwick until her discharge on 1 October 1920. Kellett was confirmed as Principal Matron of the 2nd Military District in January 1924 and retired from that post on 31 August 1929. In 1920 Kellett held the position of First President of Returned Army Nursing Sisters Association in NSW.

Kellett was involved in professional organisations and joined the Australasian Trained Nurses Association (ATNA) in 1903 and served as a member of council from 1920. Kellett, the first nurse to be elected in 1929-30, was re-elected at various times between 1933 and 1942. Other

positions held with ATNA included honorary treasurer in 1930 and president from 1937-1945. Kellett sponsored the first regular reunions of Sydney hospital nurses from 1923. In 1937 Kellett was the third Australian recipient to be awarded the Florence Nightingale Medal by the International Red Cross Society Geneva. In June 1944, Kellett retired as Matron of Sydney Hospital after 23 years in the position. She died on 12 April 1945 at the War Memorial Hospital Waverley, and was cremated after a service at St James Anglican Church Sydney. Her name is included on the Kellett family memorial at St Stephen's Anglican Church Penrith. The directors of Sydney Hospital placed a memorial tablet in the hospital chapel. The preliminary training school at Sydney Hospital bore name of Kellett until absorbed into Lucy Osborn School of Nursing 1968. The Australian Trained Nurses Association established the A M Kellett prize, awarded from 1946 to the nurse obtaining the highest marks in the written section of the registration examination.

Sources:

AWM 41: 1072. Interviews containing accounts of Nursing experiences in the AANS [Australian Army Nursing Service]. These nurses were interviewed by Matron Kellett [Index to interviews of members of AANS included in file].

Nairn, B & Serle, G (eds). Australian Dictionary of Biography Vol 9 1891-1939. Melbourne University Press 1983, pp549-550.

NAA: B2455, KELLETT A M MATRON

Newspaper article refers to Matron Kellett – The Royal Red Cross Award

Nepean Times 2 June 1917, p4

Distinguished Award: The many friends of Matron A M Kellett (daughter of Mrs Kellett of High Street, Penrith) who is now in charge of Marylebone Palace Military Hospital, England, will learn with patriotic pride and pleasure that Matron Kellett was awarded the Royal Red Cross (1st class) by the hands of the King at Buckingham Palace on 6th April.

Matron Kellett had been on furlough in Ireland, when she was summoned to return and present herself at Buckingham Palace on the date noted to receive the coveted award. The Royal Red Cross (awarded to nurses) is the equivalent to the V.C. The conferring of the distinguished award stated by hand of the King on Miss Kellett, is by the way, extremely pleasing to the public of Penrith and district, as Matron Kellett is a native of the town, and in her girlhood attended the Penrith Superior Public School, at which many of the present generation were her confreres. The congratulations of the citizens will be extended to Mrs Kellett in relation to her esteemed daughter's merited distinction.

Newspaper article refers to Matron Kellett – The Royal Red Cross Award and CBE

Nepean Times 1 November 1919, p6 c2

Distinguished Nursing Career. Return of Matron Kellett, RRC, CBE: The Kanowna, which arrived in Sydney on Sunday, brought back Matron A M M Kellett, daughter of Mrs Kellett, of High-street, Penrith. The distinguished matron, who is a native of this town, brings with her honors that are a distinct testimony to her exceptional ability, in as much as she had been decorated with the Royal Red Cross and CBE.

Matron Kellett, who received her training at the Sydney Hospital, where she was assistant matron at the time of her enlistment, left Sydney with the first troopship for Egypt in October, 1914. It was while there she was appointed military matron.

After doing transport work she went to England and was appointed Matron at Southall Hospital, where she remained for some time. Matron Kellett's next appointment was to Boulogne (France), where she continued till the signing of the armistice. On returning to England she was engaged for some time with the Australian War Records section, London, having been appointed assistant-collector of the nursing history of the AANS.

Matron Kellett left England on August 27th, coming home via Durban. Her brother, Corporal Marshall Kellett, who returned home last June after three years' active service, was awarded the Military Medal for remarkable bravery under very trying conditions.