NOBLE WORK RECOGNISED:
PENRITH'S NURSES AT WAR

Group portrait of the sick bay staff from the Australian hospital ship AMFA Grantala.

Identified left to right (back row): none identified. Middle row: Dr Alfred John Trinca; unidentified; Chief Petty Officer J. Gregg; unidentified; unidentified; **Sister Stella Lillian Colless of Penrith**, NSW; unidentified; Chief Petty Officer A. Wilson; unknown; unknown; Chaplain Charles Henderson. Front row: Unidentified; Surgeon William Nicholas Horsfall; Sister Rosa Angela Kirkcaldie; Sister Florence Elizabeth McMillan; Matron Sarah Melanie De Mestre; unidentified; Sister Bertha Ellen Burtinshaw; **Sister Rachel Clouston of Penrith, NSW; Sister Constance Neale of Penrith, NSW**; unidentified. All the nurses were selected from the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital to ensure they were a cohesive group.

...her efficiency, grit and adherence to duty, and that spirit of sacrifice and endeavour which is so fully shared by our heroic Australian Nursing Sisterhood with our gallant soldiers and sailors.

–Nepean Times, 4 November 1916, p4.

Group portrait of Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) sisters from QLD, NSW, VIC, TAS, and SA, bound for Salonica, Greece on the RMS Mooltan. Adelaide, SA., June 1917.

Identified starting at front row, left to right: **SN Adele Baker of Penrith, NSW** (20); SN Alice Cecilia Scahill of Punchbowl, NSW (56); SN Jessie Bassetti of Waverley, NSW (84); **SN Eather Edith Coggins of Penrith, NSW** (106); SN Ione Nowland of Ashfield, NSW (216).

OUR PLUCKY NURSES

During the war, 16 nurses from the Penrith district served overseas with the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force in Rabaul on hospital ships and with the Australian Imperial Force in Egypt, England, the Western Front, India, and Salonika in Greece. The nurses enlisted under terms which offered free return passage by second class steamer or military transport, free uniform and allowance for upkeep, pay rates of £100 per year for a matron while a staff nurse received £40 per year (the same rate as a private soldier). It was not until late 1916 that nurses received officer status. Working conditions were less than ideal. Many Australian nurses served in British hospitals under British staff and felt aggrieved as they had enlisted to nurse Australian soldiers.

Australian women volunteered for service in auxiliary roles during the war as cooks, nurses, drivers, interpreters, munitions workers, and skilled farm workers. The government, however, generally only accepted offers for service overseas from nurses. The 2,139 nurses who staffed the medical units were recruited from the Australian Army Nursing Service Reserve or from the civil nursing profession. Australian nurses served in trying conditions and close to the front.

At the outbreak of the war, the first combined Australian Navy and Army Expeditionary Force to leave Australia was sent to capture Rabaul, the German New Guinea capital. Accompanying this force was the Hospital Ship *Grantala*, the first to be fitted out as an Australian hospital ship for the war. On board and on duty were three Penrith nursing sisters, Stella Colless, Constance Neale, and Rachel Clouston; all had volunteered from Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

The *Grantala* served with the Australian Naval and Military Expedition Force in the former German possessions of New Guinea and Rabaul between September and December 1914. After returning from Rabaul, the nurses were discharged from their duties. The first two Australian General Hospitals had sailed for Egypt by then and the nurses were informed that it was improbable that any more nurses would be needed.

BAKER
STAFF NURSE ADELE

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE
Enlisted: 20 April 1917
Discharged: 29 January 1920
(1891 – 1966)

Mary Adele Baker was born at Penrith on October 8 1891, the daughter of Alfred and Sophia Baker (née Ashbury). She was the second eldest of 10 children and was known as "Adele" or "Dell". After leaving school, she undertook her nursing training at the Nepean Cottage Hospital. In 1913, the *Nepean Times* reported Nurse Baker was the prize-winner in the second-year nurses' examination.

Baker enlisted on 24 May 1917 in the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) and was appointed a staff nurse. She left Sydney on 9 June aboard the *RMS Mooltan*, a mail steamer, along with Penrith nurses Jessie Bassetti, Esther Coggins, Vida Greentree, Ione Nowland, Alice Scahill, and Annie Major-West; they were among 300 nurses bound for Salonika, Greece. The ship arrived at Suez on 19 July and the nurses travelled to Cairo via train. Six days later, Baker left Alexandria for Salonika. Along with sisters Greentree and Bassetti, Baker served in several British hospitals.

In May 1918, Baker was admitted to hospital with dysentery and was sent to a sisters' convalescent camp before resuming her duties in July. She worked at the 42nd and 50th general hospitals before being hospitalised with influenza. On 13 February 1919, Baker took leave in the United Kingdom. After her leave, she was attached to No. 1 General Hospital at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire in England, where many soldiers were treated for influenza. In May, Baker was admitted to No. 3 Australian Auxiliary Hospital before being transferred to Southwell Gardens Hospital.

On 17 July 1919, along with Sister Major-West, Baker embarked on the *HMAT Orsova* and arrived in Sydney on 6 September 1919. Her appointment with the Australian Army Nursing Service was terminated on 29 January 1920. Mary Adele Baker married Frederick D. H. Blois Lawton of Melbourne at St Stephen's Church, Sydney on December 22 1923. She moved to Melbourne with her new husband, where they later had two daughters, Margaret and Judy.

Her husband died in 1961. She died on March 2 1966 at the age of 74. She was cremated and her ashes placed in a wall at Boroondara General Cemetery, also known as Kew Cemetery, in Melbourne.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith
- Honour Roll, Presbyterian Church, Penrith

BASSETTI
STAFF NURSE JESSIE

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE

Enlisted: 10 May 1917
Discharged: 3 November 1919
(1881 – 1929)

Jessie Bassetti was born at Redfern in 1881, the daughter of John Baptist and Susan Bassetti. As a child, her family moved to the Grafton region, settling at Lionsville near Yulgilbar. Bassetti commenced nursing in Grafton under Dr Earle Page. Later, she was appointed to the staff at Nepean Cottage Hospital. In May 1917, Bassetti and Matron West notified the hospital board of their resignation and intention to serve overseas.

Bassetti enlisted in the Australian Army Nursing Service on 10 May 1917 and was appointed as Staff Nurse. By this time, her sister, Virginia, who had enlisted in July 1915, was nursing in France. Bassetti left Sydney on 9 June 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, Greece. The ship arrived at Suez on 19 July and the nurses travelled to Cairo via train. On 14 August, Bassetti arrived in Salonika. There, Bassetti worked in British hospitals.

In April 1918, she was sent to the sisters' convalescent camp, suffering from debility, and resumed her nursing duties with the 50th General Hospital in May. In December, Bassetti took some leave in Athens. In February 1919, Bassetti travelled to England.

From March until her return to Australia in July, Bassetti completed a course in domestic economy at the Polytechnic in Chelsea. On 9 July 1919, Bassetti and Nurse Greentree left England aboard the *Friedrichsruhe*, an ex-German ship. 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.

Bassetti's 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 48 years old. She was buried in Rookwood Anglican cemetery.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith
- Honour Roll, St Stephen's Anglican Church, Penrith

CLOUSTON
SISTER RACHEL

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE
Enlisted: 14 July 1915
Discharged: 8 October 1918
(1888 – 1965)

Rachel Clouston was born in 1888 in Penrith, the daughter of the Reverend Thomas and Rachel Clouston. Her mother died later that year. Her father was at the time the Presbyterian minister at Penrith. After attending Presbyterian Ladies College at Croydon, Clouston underwent her nursing training at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPA). She left RPA to nurse her ailing father in 1913 and returned the following year.

At the outbreak of the war, Clouston volunteered to serve on the Hospital Ship *Grantala*, along with two other Penrith nurses, Stella Colless and Constance Neale. On their return, the nurses were discharged.

Clouston enlisted with the Australian Army Nursing Service on 14 July 1915 and was appointed Sister. She left Australia on the hospital ship *Karoola* Australian Army Nursing Service and commenced her duties in Egypt on 5 April 1916 in the Choubra Infectious Hospital. In November, Clouston was hospitalised with the mumps, and in January 1917 was sent to England. She was temporarily detached for duty with No. 2 Australian Auxiliary Hospital Southall and to the St Alban's Rest Home. In April, she was transferred to No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield Park. Clouston suffered from asthma for long periods during the early part of 1917, and in July was admitted to Southwell Sanders Hospital. A medical board decided she should return to Australia.

On 22 July 1917, Clouston embarked aboard *HMAT Nestor* as a member of the nursing staff and arrived in Melbourne on 24 September. She then reenlisted and embarked on the *HMAT Nestor* on 21 November. After arriving in Southampton, she was attached to No. 2 and No. 3 Australian Auxiliary Hospitals.

Clouston returned to Australia on 10 March as a member of the nursing staff aboard the *Durham Castle*. She was discharged on 8 October 1918. Her poor health may have influenced her decision to live in Hawaii, as she relocated there in 1920.

In 1921, she was nursing the mother of prominent Hawaiian lawyer Marguerite Ashford. Clouston and Ashford became lifelong friends, and Clouston took a position as her stenographer. Clouston later married Dr John Farrell; he died in 1955. Clouston and Ashford became the first residents of Pohai Nani, a seaside retirement home in Oahu, Hawaii in 1964. She died there in April 1965.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, Penrith Superior Public School

COGGINS
STAFF NURSE ESTHER EDITH

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE
Enlisted: 4 December 1916
Discharged: 13 September 1919
(1885 – 1980)

Esther Edith (Ettie) Coggins was born in 1885 at Waverley NSW, the youngest daughter of Thomas and Clara Sara Coggins. The family relocated to a farm at Orchard Hills after Thomas' death in 1909.

Esther 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. Her brother, Herbert, was granted a short-term exemption from service in consideration of his responsibilities to his mother and three sisters.

Coggins enlisted on 4 December 1916 and was appointed 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". Coggins left Sydney on 9 June aboard the *RMS Mooltan*, a mail steamer, 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 and shortly afterwards embarked for Salonika, Greece. On arrival, Coggins was appointed to a number of British general hospitals.

On 27 April 1918, she was admitted to the sister's convalescent camp suffering from debility before returning to duty at the 50th General Hospital. Coggins was again hospitalised in October suffering from influenza. After Armistice was declared, Coggins was granted leave in England. On the voyage there, she nursed influenza patients; when she arrived in England, she continued to nurse influenza patients.

Returning to Salonika in January 1919, she resumed her duties at the 50th General Hospital and was again nursing influenza patients. On 25 February, Coggins left Salonika for her eventual return to Australia.

On 13 March, she 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. Coggins was discharged from 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 in 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.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, Orchard Hills Public School
- Honour Roll, St Stephen's Anglican Church, Penrith

COLLESS
STAFF NURSE STELLA LILLIAN

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE

Enlisted: 12 June 1915
Discharged: 13 September 1919
(1883 – 1978)

Stella Colless was born in Penrith in 1883, the fourth daughter of Alfred and Georgiana (née Jordan) Colless. Alfred Colless had founded the *Nepean Times* newspaper in 1882. After leaving school, she completed her nursing training at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

At the outbreak of war, Colless volunteered to serve on the Hospital Ship *Grantala*, along with two other Penrith nurses, Rachel Clouston and Constance Neale. In a letter in the *Nepean Times*, 24 October 1914, Colless wrote of her experiences: "We were taken to the wharf in a small launch… Everywhere there were armed guards – and imagine our importance when we were saluted, and on being allowed to pass were taken to the Officers' Mess Room… Their mess-room was formerly the German Club… They had prepared afternoon tea for us in elegant fashion – we had chocolate ice-cream, for instance; and then dozens of different types of cake… After tea we were taken to see the sights of the town. Rabaul is a very pretty place and well laid out". After returning from Rabaul, the nurses were discharged from their duties.

Colless enlisted with the Australian Army Nursing Service on 12 June 1915 and left Australia on the 14 July 1915 aboard *SS Kanowna* Australian Army Nursing Service which was on its way to England to be converted into a hospital ship. Colless then returned to Australia aboard the *Karoola* (No. 1 Hospital Ship) on 4 December 1915.

Colless continued to serve aboard the hospital ships until October 1916 when she was detached for duty at No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital in Southall, England. In February 1917, Colless transferred to No. 2 Australian General Hospital at Wimereux, France and soon afterwards was posted to No. 3 Casualty Clearing Station, located near the fighting. These stations provided emergency treatment to soldiers before they were transferred for further treatment.

At the end of July 1917, Colless was moved up to the Passchendaele front, where their work was intense and strenuous for months, often with as many as 10 surgical teams working at a time in a theatre. (A team comprised a surgeon, an anaesthetist, a sister and an orderly.) She was very impressed by the introduction of blood transfusions, a relatively new technique which saved many lives.

Colless's letters in the *Nepean Times* give a fascinating insight into the life of a nurse close to the Front. On 24 November 1917. in the *Nepean Times*, Colless wrote:

> *As you have probably heard, Fritz has been paying a great deal of attention to C.C.S.'s (Casualty Clearing Stations). He visited us many nights, and dropped bombs all around. Once he managed to drop one in our camp. Thank goodness, most of the staff were late on duty, so there were very few people about. The bomb fell in our compound, between the officer' mess and ours. One officer and a batman were killed. Goodness, knows, what would have happened to us if we had been in our tents, as they were simply riddled with holes. Fritz always came between 9.15 and 9.45, and it was rather weird lying in bed waiting for him to arrive… One night we were working in the operating theatre, when we heard guns, so rushed to see what was happening, when suddenly Fritz darted apparently overhead. Immediately we heard a report as if a bomb had fallen on us. The first thing I knew I was being hurled on to the ground by one of the M.O.'s, and a steel hat put over my head. When all the excitement was over I found myself amongst about a dozen men on the ground, in my clean white cap and apron.*

In October 1918, Colless was granted two weeks leave and returned to No. 2 AGH before taking a further two weeks leave in England in January 1919. Colless returned to Australia aboard the *Karoa* in 1919. Soon afterwards she began nursing returned servicemen at Randwick Hospital, and later the A.J.C. Convalescent Home for returned servicemen at Canonbury, Darling Point. In 1926, this home was converted to a convalescent home for children and later specifically for crippled children. In 1942, the home and its children were moved to Molong to be accommodated at the Fairbridge Farm School and Matron Colless went with them.

After her retirement, Colless lived with her family at Northbridge. She died aged 94 on 28 September 1978.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith
- Honour Roll, Penrith Superior Public School
- Honour Roll, St Stephen's Anglican Church, Penrith

GREENTREE OBE
STAFF NURSE VIDA MITYLENE

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE
Enlisted: 24 May 1917
Discharged: 4 October 1919
(1890 – 1983)

Vida Greentree was born in 1890, at Freemans Reach, NSW, and was the second eldest daughter of Albert and Jane Greentree. After leaving school, Greentree undertook her nursing training at the Nepean Cottage Hospital. When Matron West resigned in 1917 in consequence of having been called up for service abroad, Greentree was appointed temporary matron, pending the appointment of a permanent replacement. Greentree had also been listed for nursing service overseas.

On 24 May 1917, Greentree enlisted in the Australian Army Nursing Service and was appointed as Staff Nurse. She left Sydney on 9 June aboard the *RMS Mooltan*, a mail steamer, along with Penrith nurses, Adele Baker, Jessie Bassetti, Esther Coggins, Ione Nowland, Alice Scahill and Annie Major-West, and 300 nurses bound for Salonika, Greece. The ship arrived at Suez on 19 July and the nurses travelled to Cairo via train.

On 13 August, Greentree arrived in Salonika, Greece. Conditions in Salonika were less than ideal for the nurses. On 19 August 1917, shortly after Greentree's arrival, almost two-thirds of the town was destroyed by fire, which left 25,000 people homeless. Food supplies, sent from Egypt, often failed to arrive. Greentree was posted to the 60th British General Hospital at Hortiach in the hills above Salonika. In an interview with Matron Kellett in 1919, Greentree stated the hospital was "a large tented hospital with 1,600 beds… The wards were not well equipped for surgical work. We found great difficulty in sterilising our instruments". Greentree nursed German, Bulgarian and Turkish prisoners of war.

In November 1918, Greentree 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, she was given leave in Athens. In February 1919, Greentree embarked for England, where she served with the 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford. She returned to Australia aboard the *Friedrichsruhe*, along with Sister Bassetti, arriving on 4 September and was discharged on 4 October 1919.

A large crowd assembled at Windsor Railway Station to welcome her home. *The Windsor and Richmond Gazette* wrote on 26 August 1919: "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". She returned to Freemans Reach and held the position of postmistress for many years. On 12 June 1965, her service to the Freemans Reach community was acknowledged when she was awarded the Order of the British Empire.

Vida Greentree never married and died in Brisbane on 1 September 1983, aged 93.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith
- Honour Roll, St Stephen's Anglican Church, Penrith
- Freemans Reach First and Second World Wars Memorial

HARFORD
STAFF NURSE MARY ROSA

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE
Enlisted: 8 October 1915
Discharged: 21 June 1918
(1881 – 1964)

Mary Rosa (May) Harford was born in 1881 at St Marys, the daughter of Thomas and Eliza Harford. The family ran a tanning and boot factory at St Marys until the death of Thomas Harford in 1893, when some of the family moved to Lithgow. After leaving school, Harford completed her nursing training at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney. She worked at Lithgow Hospital for a time before moving to Sydney to work.

On 8 October 1915, Harford enlisted in the Australian Army Nursing Service and was assigned to the Quarterly General Reinforcements, No. 2 Australian General Hospital as a staff nurse. She left Sydney aboard the *HMAT Orsova* Australian Army Nursing Service on 19 October. After arriving in Egypt on 9 December, Harford was assigned to the Ghezireh Hospital for a brief period before being reassigned to the Western Front. She left Alexandria on 26 March 1916 arriving in Marseilles on 4 April. On arrival at Etaples, Harford was assigned to the 23rd General Hospital and then No. 2 Australian General Hospital at Wimereux, France.

In January and August 1917, Harford took leave in England. On 24 August, she was declared medically unfit for further service to the British Expeditionary Force and was transferred to England. She was assigned to Australian hospitals in Southall and Dartford.

In April 1918, Matron Bessie Pocock recorded an incident in which Harford refused to do night duty. She was reported to the commanding officer and was ordered to do night duty. She again refused. Harford's stated that she hated night duty. She was then placed under virtual arrest and was not allowed to leave the hospital for more than one hour while she waited transport back to Australia. On 24 April 1918, Harford returned to Australia aboard *HMAT Suevic* as a passenger and was discharged on 21 June 1918.

On her return, Nurse Harford spent some months working in the Garrison Hospital, Sydney. In March 1919, Harford and another nurse, Catherine Adaway, nursed in the Vancouver Military Hospital and later in military hospitals nursing returned soldiers in Seattle, Portland, Chicago, New York and San Francisco.

By 1926, she was back in Sydney, living in Pine Street Marrickville. In 1933, Harford was running the Baby Health Centre at Broken Hill. The *Daily Telegraph* reported on her work there. She had commenced her work in 1932, and with a staff of five nurses, oversaw four centres. By the early 1940s, Harford was working in Sydney at Prince Henry Hospital.

She died in Marrickville 22 July 1964, and was buried in St Marys General Cemetery. In 2008, her World War One watch was sold on eBay.

Memorial Details:

- No known local memorial

KEAREY
STAFF NURSE ELIZABETH

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE

Enlisted: 21 October 1914
Discharged: 14 January 1919
(1882 – 1968)

Elizabeth Kearey was born in 1882 in North Sydney, the daughter of James and Ellen Kearey. After her father's death in 1901, her mother met and married Penrith railway engine driver Frederick Elliott. They lived in Henry Street, Penrith. Elizabeth completed her nursing training at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney.

Kearey joined the Australian Army Nursing Service in August 1914 and left Australia aboard *HMAT Kyarra* Australian Army Nursing Service with No. 2 Australian General Hospital on 28 November 1914. Her brother, Leo, also enlisted in 1914, followed by brother John in 1915. Kearey served with No. 2 Australian General Hospital in Egypt. In December 1915 she was promoted to Sister.

In March 1916, Kearey embarked for the Western Front, where she served with No. 2 Australian General Hospital at Wimereux, France. In December 1916, Kearey took leave in England, and in January was transferred to duty in England and commenced duty with No. 3 Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Dartford soon afterwards.

On 27 September 1917, she returned to Australia on nursing duties with No. 7 Sea Transport Service aboard the A29 Service. In February 1918, she embarked from Sydney on the Ormonde for Egypt. On 24 May 1918, Kearey and another Penrith nurse, Jessie Perkins, embarked from Alexandria on the *Indarra* bound for Marseilles, finally disembarking at Southampton on 6 June. They then returned to Australia aboard the *Matatua* as part of the nursing staff, arriving in Sydney on 15 August. They reembarked aboard *HMAT Medic* on 2 November 1918. However, the ship was returned to Australia in December and placed in quarantine owing to the influenza outbreak onboard.

After the war, Kearey was appointed Principal Matron of No. 2 Military District. In February 1937, she was chosen as NSW nurse for the contingent that travelled to England for the coronation of King George VI in May. Australian nurses marched with the troops in London, received their coronation medals at Buckingham Palace, and toured the battlefields of the Western Front. The contingent returned to Australia five months later.

Kearey enlisted in the Second World War on 16 October 1939 and served as Matron in charge of the NSW Army Nursing Services, reaching the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

On retiring at 61, in January 1944, she lived with her sister Mary Angela in North Sydney. Elizabeth Kearey died on 17 January 1968 at the age of 85 and is buried in the Macquarie Park Cemetery, North Ryde.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith

KELLETT CBE, RRC
MATRON ADELAIDE MAUD

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE
Enlisted: 10 September 1914
Discharged: 1 October 1920
(1873 – 1945)

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

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, she was appointed as an assistant to Rose Creal, Matron of Sydney Hospital.

Kellett enlisted with the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) on 10 September 1914. On 15 October, as a member of the first nursing contingent, she left Australia aboard the *A14 Euripides* and served as the theatre sister aboard ship. She reached Alexandria on 3 December and Kellett was allotted to Mena House and placed in charge of the operating theatre.

On 19 January 1915, No. 2 Australian General Hospital (AGH) commenced operations at Mena House. Kellett remained there until 6 May, when No. 2 AGH relocated to the Ghezireh Palace.

In September, Kellett was appointed to the hospital ship *Gascon*, used to transport the wounded from Gallipoli to Lemnos. She 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 6pm, in barges, mostly medical cases… I feared from the terrible firing, especially about 3am, 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..."

On 20 January 1916, Kellett returned to No. 2 AGH until appointed temporary Matron of the Choubra Military Infectious Hospital on 8 February 1916. On 7 July 1916 Kellett, in charge of 45 sisters, sailed for England. After a brief stay at No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital (AAH), Harefield, she commenced duty at the newly formed No. 2 AAH, Southall on 6 August 1916. This facility became the centre for amputee cases.

On 23 February 1917, Kellett was awarded the Royal Red Cross (1st Class) by the King at Buckingham Palace for her special devotion in nursing the sick and wounded.

On 10 July 1917, she was appointed Matron of the 25th General Hospital, Hardelot, France.

After the hospital closed in February 1919, Kellett returned to England. She was then appointed to assist in compiling the records of the AANS. During this period, she interviewed the 128 AANS nurses still in England, awaiting transport to Australia. Kellett was mentioned in dispatches in 1916 and 1919, and was appointed as Commander of the British Empire (CBE) Military Division the same year.

In 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. She was confirmed as Principal Matron of the 2nd Military District in January 1924 and retired from that post on 31 August 1929. In 1920, she held the position of First President of Returned Army Nursing Sisters Association in NSW.

Kellett was also involved in professional nursing 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 she 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, she retired as Matron of Sydney Hospital after 23 years in the position. She died on 12 April 1945 at the War Memorial Hospital Waverley.

The directors of Sydney Hospital also placed a memorial tablet in the hospital chapel in her honour. The preliminary training school at Sydney Hospital bore the name of Kellett until absorbed into the Lucy Osborn School of Nursing in 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.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith
- Honour Roll, Penrith Superior Public School
- Honour Roll, St Stephen's Anglican Church, Penrith

MAJOR-WEST
MATRON ANNIE

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE
Enlisted: 10 May 1917
Discharged: 24 October 1919
(1881 – 1951)

Annie West (as she was then known) was born around 1881 at Bathurst NSW, the daughter of Edward Major and Annie Louisa West. Her mother died in 1887, when she was 6 years old, and her father died in 1926. Her full name was Annie Elizabeth Major West, and she used several variations during her career.

She trained at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, passed her Australasian Trained Nurses' Association exam in 1909, and became the Matron of the Nepean Cottage Hospital in 1911. In November 1915, Dr Higgins attributed the success of the nurses in their exams to "having a highly intellectual Matron".

Matron West enlisted as a staff nurse on 10 May 1917. She left Sydney on 9 June aboard the *RMS Mooltan*, a mail steamer, along with Penrith nurses, Adele Baker, Jessie Bassetti, Esther Coggins, Vida Greentree, Ione Nowland and Alice Scahill. Scahill, Greentree, Bassetti and Baker were also from the Nepean Cottage Hospital staff. They were among 300 nurses bound for Salonika, Greece.

After arrival on 31 July, West joined the 52nd General Hospital before serving briefly with the 50th General Hospital and 66th General Hospital before being admitted to the 43rd General Hospital for treatment on her right hand. On 10 November, she was transferred to the Red Cross Convalescent House before returning to duty with the 50th General Hospital two weeks later.

On 17 February 1918, West's name was changed on her service record to read "Annie Elizabeth Major-West". On 27 June 1918, Major-West was sent to the Sisters' Convalescent Camp at Salonika suffering from debility, re-joining her unit on 12 August. On 8 September, Major-West was admitted to the 43rd General Hospital and was transferred to the Sisters' Convalescent Camp on 15 September, suffering from influenza. On 20 September 1918, Major-West returned to duty with the 50th General Hospital.

Major-West was awarded the Royal Red Cross 2nd Class on 1 January 1919 for showing exceptional devotion and competency in the performance of her nursing duties. On 2 February 1919, she took leave in England before her transfer on 19 March to No. 1 Australian General Hospital at Sutton Veny. She remained there until 18 July when she embarked on the *HMAT Orsova* for her return to Australia. After disembarking at Sydney on 6 September, Major-West's appointment was terminated on 24 October 1919.

On returning to Australia, she took up a position as Senior Obstetric Sister at the Royal Hospital for Women, Paddington. In 1924, she became the Matron there and continued in the position until her resignation in 1946. She died at the Repatriation General Hospital in Concord on June 7th 1951 at 70 years of age.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith
- Honour Roll, St Stephen's Anglican Church, Penrith

MOREHEAD
SISTER ADA ALICE

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE

Enlisted: 31 July 1915
Discharged: 26 September 1919
(1887 – 1951)

Ada Alice Morehead was born in 1887, the daughter of John and Annie Morehead of "Ferndale", Luddenham. She trained as a nurse at the Nepean Cottage Hospital and later the Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital. Before her enlistment, Morehead was on the staff of the District Nursing Association of Sydney.

Morehead applied for enlistment with the Australian Army Nursing Service on 24 July 1915 and was approved on 31 July, the day she left Australia on board the *RMS Orontes*, along with Penrith nurse, Constance Neale.

On 28 October, Morehead commenced duty at the Norfolk War Hospital, England. By December, she had been transferred to the 4th London General Hospital. On 2 November 1916, Morehead was transferred to No. 3 Australian General Hospital at Brighton, before being detached for duty with No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital in March 1917.

In company with Sister McAnene (from Camden), she visited Penrith in Cumberland, England. She mentioned in the *Nepean Times* on 25 August 1917: "The town, however, is in very marked contrast to 'our' Penrith, and possibly the only features common to both being that they are situated on rivers and are both in counties of Cumberland. Probably the last-mentioned fact was responsible for the name being chosen for 'our' town."

In January 1918, Morehead was posted for duty with the 5th Stationary Hospital in France, and in April, was posted to No. 1 Australian General Hospital and promoted to Sister in December. On 28 December 1918, Morehead disembarked at Southampton bound for Sutton Veny, Wiltshire. Between March and July 1919, Morehead was granted leave for non-military employment in England. This leave was cancelled in May following a medical board review that found she was debilitated after a bout of influenza.

On 4 June 1919, along with her sister Clara, Morehead embarked as a member of the nursing staff aboard the Bremen bound for Australia, arriving on 28 July. On 29 August, along with soldiers Freeburn, Ahearn and the Fuller brothers, they were given a public welcome home and presentation in the Luddenham Temperance Hall.

After the war, Morehead worked as Matron of Duntroon Hospital and at the Harefield Private Hospital in Annandale. In 1931 she married teacher James McKay at Strathfield. In 1936, they were living at 26 Hopetown Avenue in Mosman. McKay died in 1947. With her sister, Florence, she visited her sister Clara in South Africa. Ada took ill on the voyage home. She died in Colombo hospital, Ceylon on 7 July 1951. She is buried with her husband in Rookwood cemetery.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, Methodist Church, Luddenham
- Honour Roll, St Mary Magdalene Anglican Church, St Marys
- Honour Roll, St Thomas' Anglican Church, Penrith

MOREHEAD
STAFF NURSE CLARA EMILY

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE
Enlisted: 30 August 1917
Discharged: 20 August 1919
(1889 – 1972)

Clara Emily Morehead was born in 1889, the daughter of John and Annie Morehead of "Ferndale", Luddenham. She completed her nursing training at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital along with her sister, Eva.

Morehead enlisted with the Australian Army Nursing Service as a staff nurse on 30 August 1917, two years after her sister Ada, and embarked from Melbourne on *HMAT Nestor* on 21 November. Just before she left, the local Luddenham community presented her with a travelling rug as a token of their appreciation.

In January 1918, Morehead was sent on duty to the 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital in Southall. In February, she was transferred to the 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital in Dartford. On 10 November 1918, Morehead was posted to France to work in the 1st Australian General Hospital. By the end of the year, she was back in England, working in the military hospital at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire.

On 8 March 1919, Morehead was suffering from a sore throat and was admitted to hospital. From March until her return to Australia in July, with her sister Ada, Morehead completed a course in domestic economy at the Polytechnic in Chelsea. On 28 July 1919, the sisters returned to Australia on the *Bremen*. Morehead was discharged on 20 August. On 29 August they were given a welcome home party at Luddenham.

After her discharge, Morehead re-joined Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney, and was appointed Sister. She married Tom du Toit in 1923 in Durban, South Africa and resided there until her death in 1972.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, St Mary Magdalene Anglican Church, St Marys
- Honour Roll, St Thomas' Anglican Church, Penrith

NEALE
STAFF NURSE CONSTANCE MARGARET

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE

Enlisted: 31 July 1915
Discharged: 25 March 1917
(1885 – 1972)

Constance Margaret Neale was born in Penrith in 1885, the daughter of Henry James Fulton Neale and Jane Graham. After leaving school, Neale completed her nursing training and at the outbreak of war, was employed at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

Once war had been declared, Neale volunteered to serve on the Hospital Ship *Grantala*, along with two other Penrith nurses, Rachel Clouston and Stella Colless. After returning from Rabaul, the nurses were discharged from their duties. Neale enlisted as a Staff Nurse with the Australian Army Nursing Service on 31 July 1915 and was allocated to No. 1 Australian General Hospital Reinforcements.

Constance Neale's trunk that travelled with her during her war service is now in the care of Penrith City Library and can be viewed in the Penrith Library's Research Room.

Along with Ada Morehead, Neale embarked on the *RMS Orontes*, which left Australia on 15 July 1915. After arriving in Egypt, she was attached to No. 3 Australian General Hospital in Abbassia, near Cairo. In July, Neale travelled to England, and in August reported for duty at No. 2 Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Southall England.

In September 1916, Neale was attached to Queen Mary's Military Hospital at Whalley, Lancashire. On 14 January 1917, Neale was attached for duty to the hospital ship *HT Kanowna*, which was returning to Australia, arriving in Sydney on 10 March. Neale's military appointment was terminated on 25 March 1917 "due to marriage".

Neale married Henry Alston Stanley Holliday, son of Reverend Henry Thomas Holliday, on 3 April 1917 at St. Stephen's Anglican Church in Penrith. Holliday had served with the 56th Battalion between July 1915 and October 1916. Three children were born to them.

Constance Margaret Neale died on 17 May 1972 and is buried with her husband and son. Lloyd, in Macquarie Park Cemetery in Ryde. Ross, their son, donated his mother's trunk to Penrith City Library.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith
- Honour Roll, Penrith Superior Public School
- Honour Roll, St Stephen's Anglican Church, Penrith

Stanley Holliday and
Constance Neale

NOWLAND
STAFF NURSE IONE EVELYN GRACE

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE
Enlisted: 24 May 1917
Discharged: 31 May 1919
(1887 – 1974)

Ione Evelyn Grace Nowland was born in Penrith in 1887, the daughter of Edward and Louisa Nowland. Her father was a coach builder and painter. By the 1890s, the family had moved to Ryde. Ione undertook her nursing training at Sydney Hospital, passing her final examinations in September 1915. By the time of her enlistment, her parents were living in Ashfield.

Ione Nowland enlisted on 24 May 1917. She left Sydney on 9 June aboard the *RMS Mooltan*, a mail steamer, along with Penrith nurses Adele Baker, Jessie Bassetti, Esther Coggins, Vida Greentree, Alice Scahill and Annie Major-West, and 300 nurses bound for Salonika, Greece. The ship arrived at Suez on 19 July, and the nurses travelled to Cairo via train. On 13 August, Nowland arrived in Salonika, Greece, and there she worked in British hospitals. In November 1918, Nowland was evacuated to Cairo with nervous debility, and in December, was invalided back to Australia, returning on board the *Leicestershire* on 23 January 1919. She was discharged on 31 May 1919.

Nowland married surveyor Lieutenant William Charles O'Toole at St. Phillip's Anglican Church, Sydney, on 27 March 1920. They moved to the Clarence River district where her husband was attached to the Grafton Lands Office. They divorced in 1923, and Nowland reverted to using her maiden name. In 1925, she was appointed assistant to the registrar of the newly established Nurses' Registration Board. She was responsible for inspecting training schools.

In 1931, appalled by the nurses' conditions, she worked with Jessie Street to form a nurses' union in NSW. On 27 March 1931, Nowland became the first president of the NSW Nurses' Association. In 1936, for the first time, there was uniformity of pay and conditions for nurses in public and private hospitals in the state. Soon after, Nowland resigned as president. She later worked as a private nurse in Sydney's northern suburbs.

Nowland died on 4 November 1974 in a convalescent home at Roseville.

Memorial Details:

- No known local memorial

PERKINS
SISTER FLORRIE MANSON

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE
Enlisted: 10 August 1915
Discharged: 13 October 1917
(1883 – 1968)

Florrie Manson Perkins was born in Penrith in 1883, the youngest daughter of Linus and Sarah Perkins. Her family had lived at Mount Capicure, Rooty Hill, since the 1860s. Her father was an active community member both at Penrith and Parramatta. In 1900, he applied for Florrie to be admitted to Nepean Cottage Hospital as a probationer so that she might gain experience as a nurse. The hospital had not admitted probationers before, but after some consultation, Florrie was accepted as one of the inaugural probationer nurses in 1903. In July 1904, she was offered a probationary nurse position at the Coast Hospital, Little Bay (later Prince Henry Hospital), and left with the best wishes of the Cottage Hospital.

By 1915, she had progressed to Matron of the David Berry Hospital in Berry – this was the position she left to enlist with the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS).

Perkins enlisted with the AANS on 10 August 1915, and embarked for Egypt on 21 August. In March 1916, she left Alexandria for Marseilles, France. By June, she was on duty at the No. 2 Australian General Hospital at Wimereux, France. In January 1917, Perkins was sick and was sent to the Hardelot convalescent home. By the end of February, she had returned to duty.

In July 1917, Perkins and her sister Jessie were sent to England for duty on a transport ship back to Australia. They were both transferred to the AIF Headquarters, London, on 18 July 1917, and returned to Australia aboard *HMAT Demosthenes*. They disembarked in Melbourne and completed the trip to Sydney aboard A14 Euripides. On 13 October 1917, on the same day as her sister, Perkin's appointment was terminated.

Florrie Perkins married solicitor Richard Watkins Hooke two months later, on 11 December 1917, at St Stephen's Presbyterian Church in Sydney. They had two children, Richard and Frederick. Florrie died on 27 May 1968 at Mosman.

Memorial Details:

- No known local memorial
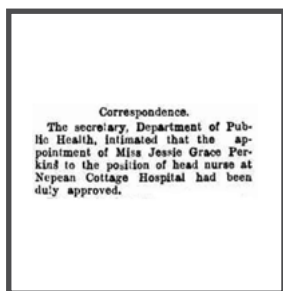
PERKINS
STAFF NURSE JESSIE GRACE

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE

Enlisted: 9 October 1915
Discharged: 14 January 1919
(1880 – 1965)

Jessie Grace Perkins was born in 1880 at Penrith, the daughter of Linus and Sarah Perkins. It is believed that Jessie completed her schooling at Penrith Public School before undertaking her nursing training. She was appointed Head Nurse at Nepean Cottage Hospital in April 1914.

Perkins enlisted with the Australian Army Nursing Service as a staff nurse on 9 October 1915 and was allocated to the quarterly general reinforcements of No. 2 Australian General Hospital (AGH). She embarked on *HMAT Orsova* on 10 November and was taken on strength by AGH on 9 December, then stationed in Egypt. On 13 October 1916, Perkins was attached to the Choubra Military Infectious Hospital near Cairo. In January 1917, she sailed for England and was then sent to France to serve with No. 13 Stationary Hospital at Rouen before transferring to No. 83 General Hospital at Boulogne, France.

On 18 July 1917, along with her sister Florrie, Perkins was transferred to the AIF Headquarters, London, and returned to Australia aboard *HMAT Demosthenes*. They disembarked in Melbourne and completed the trip to Sydney aboard A14 Euripides. On 13 October 1917, on the same day as her sister Florrie, Perkin's appointment was terminated.

She was then employed on home service and placed on the AIF Reserve. Perkins was later attached to No. 7 Sea Transport Section, which allowed transports to return casualties instead of having to carry them on hospital ships. Each section made several voyages, staying in England for a few days to a few weeks before making another voyage, usually from the same port but on a different ship. Perkins re-embarked aboard *SS Ormonde* on 2 March 1918 and disembarked at Suez on 4 April.

On 24 May 1918, Perkins and another Penrith nurse, Elizabeth Kearey, embarked from Alexandria on the *Indarra* bound for Marseilles, finally disembarking at Southampton on 6 June. They then returned to Australia aboard the *Matatua* as part of the nursing staff, arriving in Sydney on 15 August. They re-embarked aboard *HMAT Medic* on 2 November 1918. However, the ship was returned to Australia in December and placed in quarantine owing to the influenza outbreak onboard.

Perkins was discharged on 14 January 1919, and shortly afterwards was hospitalised at No. 3 Australian Auxiliary Hospital with tonsillitis. In 1922, she married William Braithwaite at Ashfield. He was from the Braithwaite family of Exeter farm at Kemps Creek. They lived in Albert Road, Strathfield. Braithwaite died in 1958, and Jessie in 1965.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith

SCAHILL
STAFF NURSE ALICE CECILIA 'CECILY'

AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE

Enlisted: 10 May 1917
Discharged: 30 November 1918
(1892 – 1973)

Alice Cecilia Scahill was born in 1892 at Canterbury, the daughter of Thomas and Theresa Scahill. The family lived in Castlereagh Street and North Street, Penrith. After leaving school, Alice followed her sister, Rose, into nursing. She commenced her nursing training at the Nepean Cottage Hospital in 1912 and continued working there until she left to enlist for active service. Around the time of Scahill's enlistment, her mother moved to Punchbowl to live.

Scahill enlisted on 16 May 1917 and was appointed a staff nurse. She left Sydney on 9 June aboard the *RMS Mooltan*, a mail steamer, along with Penrith nurses Adele Baker, Jessie Bassetti, Esther Coggins, Vida Greentree, Ione Nowland, and Annie Major-West; they were among 300 nurses bound for Salonika, Greece. On arrival, Scahill served briefly with the 52nd General Hospital before transferring to the 50th General Hospital.

On 19 April 1918, Scahill was admitted to the 50th General Hospital with enteric fever. On 24 June, a medical board declared her unfit for duty and noted that she required convalescent treatment caused by her military service at Salonika. The board recommended that she be evacuated back to Australia. On 26 June, Scahill was transferred to the Sisters' Convalescent Camp and in July; she embarked for Egypt and then on to Australia aboard the *HT Kanowna*.

On her return, Scahill worked as a district nurse, then opened a private maternity hospital at Henry Street, Punchbowl. She later became Matron of Bankstown Hospital Outpatients Department. Scahill married optometrist Ernest John Paxton in 1948 and they lived at Killara. She died on 29 December 1973, and is buried at the Woronora Lawn Cemetery, Sutherland.

Memorial Details:

- Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith

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STATEMENT OF RECOGNITION OF PENRITH CITY'S ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURAL HERITAGE

Council values the unique status of Aboriginal people as the original owners and custodians of lands and waters, including the land and waters of Penrith City. Council values the unique status of Torres Strait Islander people as the original owners and custodians of the Torres Strait Islands and surrounding waters. We work together for a united Australia and City that respects this land of ours that values the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage, and provides justice and equity for all.
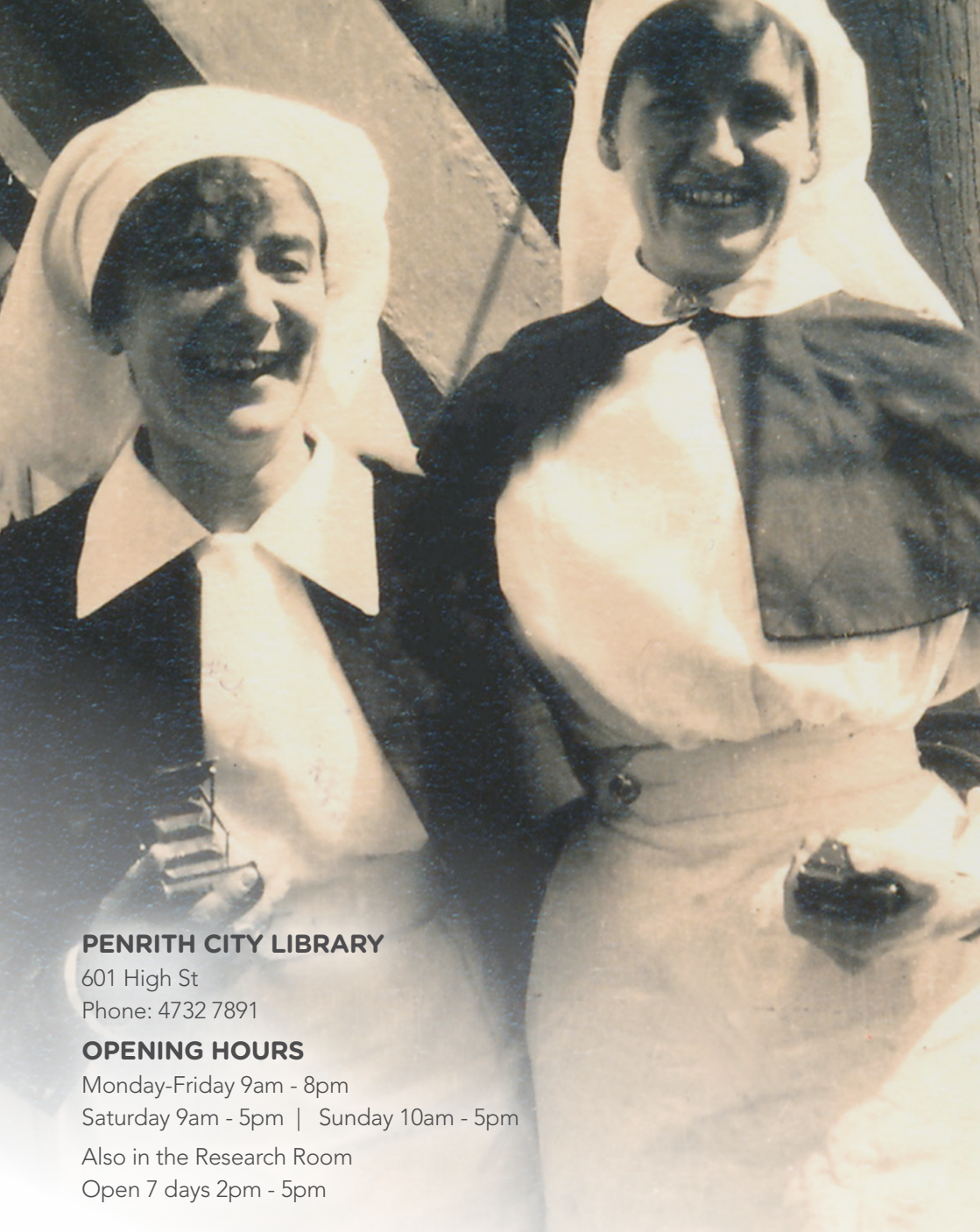
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601 High St
Phone: 4732 7891

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Saturday 9am - 5pm | Sunday 10am - 5pm

Also in the Research Room
Open 7 days 2pm - 5pm

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