

# Ada Rose Alleyn



Figure 1 Ada Rose Alleyn, image, accessed 10th April, 2017, <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/280309>

Ada Rose Alleyn embarked from Melbourne on the HMAT Benalla A24 on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1917 and arrived in Plymouth on 19<sup>th</sup> July. The main hospital she worked at was the Croydon War Hospital.<sup>1</sup> The Croydon war hospital was originally a large school approximately 16km away from London.<sup>2</sup> The military took over the school during the war and from 1915 to 1919 it was a war hospital. The hospital had 1,000 beds and consisted of a nursing staff of 80. The hospital was created for the troops in the eastern command, who were based in London and fought on the western front. The hospital treated those suffering from nerve, joint or jaw injuries, diseases of the ear or those needing general medical care. It also provided care for any sick servicemen in the area. As the war progressed, the treatment that the hospital gave changed. Ear and nerve cases were transferred to other hospitals and the newly vacant space was given to wounded and sick servicemen from overseas.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 2 'HMAT Benalla', Flotilla Australia, Accessed: 6th May 2017, <https://www.flotilla-australia.com/hmat.htm>



Figure 3 Ecclesbourne Road, image, accessed 4th May, 2017, <http://ezitis.myzen.co.uk/croydonwar.html>

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Record Search', Australian Government, National Archives of Australia, 2017, Accessed: 6th April 2017, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=3032058>

<sup>2</sup> 'The Crescent Primary School to London- Google search', Google, Accessed: 7th May 2017, <https://www.google.com.au/search?q=croydon+to+london&oq=croydon+to+london&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l5.4625j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#q=the+crescent+primary+school+croydon+to+london>

<sup>3</sup> 'Lost Hospitals of London', 2017, Accessed: 4th May 2017, <http://ezitis.myzen.co.uk/croydonwar.html>

Before the war Australia was a small colony ready to prove its self to the rest of the world.<sup>4</sup> Ada was born to Francis Alleyn and Eliza nee Clements, in the small town of Wallaroo<sup>5</sup> approximately 160km from Adelaide.<sup>6</sup> In the early 1900s Adelaide had a population of 162,000.<sup>7</sup> Ada's family moved to the city so they could access more work and education. They lived at 19 George Street, St. Peters.<sup>8</sup> Before Ada joined the war as a nurse she had completed her certificate<sup>9</sup> and had experience working in the Royal Adelaide hospital for three years as a nurse.<sup>10</sup> Back then the nurses wore a uniform



full



similar to the nurses in Britain. They had a white cap and



a

length, white bib apron over the nurse's long skirt.

Ada also had to wear another uniform going to and from the hospital; this uniform was a black cap with streamers and wide white fine material bands for tying under the chin, with a long black cape to cover the nurses dress.<sup>11</sup>

When Ada boarded the ship Benalla in Melbourne on the 12<sup>th</sup> may 1917<sup>12</sup>, the atmosphere was one of excitement. The ship was carrying just medical officers, headed for Plymouth, England. It docked

<sup>4</sup> Burton, G, Caulfield, M, Clark, T, Goldie, D 2001, *Australians at War- Episode 2*, DVD ABC, Sydney.

<sup>5</sup> 'Record Search', *Australian Government, National Archives of Australia*, 2017, Accessed: 6th April 2017, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=3032058>

<sup>6</sup> 'Wallaroo to Adelaide- Google search', *Google*, Accessed: 7th May 2017, <http://www.healthmuseumsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/4.2.63.jpg> *Figure 4 Nursing Uniforms of Royal Adelaide Hospital, image, accessed 2nd May, 2017,* <http://www.healthmuseumsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/4.2.63.jpg> *Figure 4 Adelaide 1910, image, accessed 4th May, 2017,* <http://www.localhistories.org/adelaide.html>

<sup>7</sup> *Launceston*, 2017, <http://www.localhistories.org/adelaide.html>

<sup>8</sup> 'RSL Virtual War Memorial | Ada Rose ALLEYN', *RSL Virtual War Memorial*, Accessed: 10th April 2017, <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/280309>

<sup>9</sup> 'Our History | Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch)', *Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch)*, 2017, Accessed: 2nd May 2017, <https://www.anmfsa.org.au/about-us/our-history/>

<sup>10</sup> 'RSL Virtual War Memorial | Ada Rose ALLEYN', *RSL Virtual War Memorial*, Accessed: 10th April 2017, <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/280309>

<sup>11</sup> 'Nursing Uniforms of Royal Adelaide Hospital 1890 to 1990 | Health Museum of South Australia', *Royal Adelaide Hospital*, 2014, Accessed: 2nd May 2017, <http://www.healthmuseumsa.org.au/histories/nursing-uniforms-of-royal-adelaide-hospital-1890-to-1990/>

<sup>12</sup> 'Record Search', *Australian Government, National Archives of Australia*, 2017, Accessed: 6th April 2017, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=3032058>

in Plymouth on 19<sup>th</sup> July,<sup>13</sup> (380 km from London).<sup>14</sup> Ada then caught the steam train to London.<sup>15</sup> The medical officers stayed at the hotel York for a few weeks.<sup>16</sup> From there they caught another steam train to Croydon. Life in the Croydon War hospital was hard work, with the constant flow of men coming in with new injuries. It was a very large hospital with lots of beds and patients and not many staff.

The hospital was split into five divisions/sections as it had been when it was a school.

The first section (Davidson Road War Hospital) had 250 beds for the sick and wounded servicemen from overseas.

The second section (Ecclesbourne Road War Hospital) had 140 beds for servicemen suffering from joint injuries.

The third section (Ingram Road War Hospital) had 165 beds for recovering patients needing massage and exercise.

The fourth section (Stanford Road War Hospital) was built just before the war and hadn't yet been used as a school before the military claimed it. This section had 165 beds and was for jaw injuries (mandibular fractures) caused by shrapnel or gunshots

The fifth section (The Crescent War Hospital) had 350 beds for servicemen with nerve injuries.<sup>17</sup>

Due to the nature of the hospital's work, it is assumed that Ada was skilled or specialised in the areas of treatment the hospital provided. Not only did Ada deal with physical injuries but most men would've been traumatised by the war. The patients suffering from jaw injuries would've been a rather hideous sight. This would have included those with blown off jaws, infections or any other such injuries suffered in war. The men had few pleasures when the hospital first opened, but by the time Ada arrived the public had provided many billiards tables and several bagatelle boards. This helped the men focus on something other than the war and to get out of their rooms. Christmases were celebrated with turkey dinners, Christmas puddings, cakes, apples, nuts and other provisions.<sup>18</sup> It was very different to Christmas in Australia. It was the first white Christmas Ada had seen and even though she was working in a war hospital, Christmas was a nice break from the business of the



Figure 6 No.1 Australian General Hospital, image, accessed 7th May, 2017, [http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-IX7\\_it3Gwrg/VTXbLEJ3-OI/AAAAAAAAAG7A/KirUas2IRAg/s1600/E03422.JPG](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-IX7_it3Gwrg/VTXbLEJ3-OI/AAAAAAAAAG7A/KirUas2IRAg/s1600/E03422.JPG)

<sup>13</sup> 'FLOTILLA AUSTRALIA', *Flotilla Australia*, 2007, Accessed: 6th May 2017, <https://www.flotilla.com.au/>

<sup>14</sup> 'Plymouth to London- Google search', *Google*, Accessed: 4th May 2017, <https://www.google.com.au/#q=plymouth+to+london&spf=1494452189516>

<sup>15</sup> 'BBC Schools- Transport', *BBC*, 2017, Accessed: 5th May 2017, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1/25237882>

<sup>16</sup> 'Record Search', *Australian Government, National Archives of Australia*, 2017, Accessed: 6th April 2017, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=3032058>

<sup>17</sup> 'Lost Hospitals of London', 2017, Accessed: 4th May 2017, <http://ezitis.myzen.co.uk/australiannurses.html>

<sup>18</sup> 'Lost Hospitals of London', 2017, Accessed: 4th May 2017, <http://ezitis.myzen.co.uk/croydonwar.html>

hospital.

Ada left the Croydon War Hospital on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 1918 to work at no.1 AGH (Australian General Hospital), Rouen, France.<sup>1920</sup> Like the Croydon War Hospital, the hospitals in Rouen weren't near the front lines. Shortly after Ada arrived the hospital was under command of a new matron, Matron E. Cornwall A.A.N.S. This meant that not only was Ada getting used to some changes but the whole hospital was too. The hospital closed on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1918, a few weeks after the war had ended. Instead of traveling to Sutton Veny, England where it was re-opening, Ada returned to the Croydon War Hospital on the 19<sup>th</sup> December.<sup>2122</sup>

She was able to enjoy another Christmas at the hospital before falling ill on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 1919 with influenza. She was first admitted to the no.1. AGH, then on the 5<sup>th</sup> March she was transferred to the Australian sick sister's hospital, Southwell gardens.<sup>23</sup> The hospital had a total of 26 beds and a nursing staff of three and the matron. The hospital was quite a comforting place and even though she was sick it was nice for Ada to be taken care of for a while. There was also a drawing room that Ada could spend time in as she began to feel better as well as a dining room.<sup>24</sup> She was dispatched on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1919. She embarked on the ship 'Shropshire' from England on 1<sup>st</sup> April and disembarked in Adelaide 5<sup>th</sup> July 1919.<sup>25</sup>

The Croydon war hospital closed on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 1919. Over all 19,182 patients were treated with 177 who died. The hospital had a mortality rate of under 1%.<sup>26</sup>

Ada Rose Alleyn was an ANZAC. When most people think of the word ANZAC they think of the brave men fighting for the country out on the frontline. But many overlook the ANZAC women. They had to be brave like the men, dedicated, committed, gentle, friendly, observant, orderly, obedient and courageous. While the men faced challenges out on the battlefield, the nurses faced challenges in and outside of the hospital. They worked extremely long shifts with no break, sometimes over 15 hours. They saw some horrific sights and witnessed some horrific things. They were continuously fighting for respect amongst the men and other nursing staff. It was not easy to be a nurse. They were looked down upon by the men, told that war was no place for women. However without them

---

<sup>19</sup> 'Record Search', *Australian Government, National Archives of Australia*, 2017, Accessed: 6th April 2017, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=3032058>

<sup>20</sup>

'WW1 Rouen and its base hospitals- WW1 Battlefield Tours: Australia, Canada, NZ, UK, USA', *Spirit Of Remembrance*, 2017, Accessed: 7th May 2017, <http://www.spiritofremembrance.com/page/ww1-rouen-and-its-base-hospitals>

<sup>21</sup> 'Through These Lines: No.1 Australian General Hospital', Bernard & Cheryl, 2011, Accessed: 4th May 2017, <http://throughtheselines.com.au/research/1-AGH>

<sup>22</sup>

'Record Search', *Australian Government, National Archives of Australia*, 2017, Accessed: 6th April 2017, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=3032058>

<sup>23</sup> 'Record Search', *Australian Government, National Archives of Australia*, 2017, Accessed: 6th April 2017, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=3032058>

<sup>24</sup> 'Lost Hospitals of London', 2017, Accessed: 4th May 2017, <http://ezitis.myzen.co.uk/australiannurses.html>

<sup>25</sup> 'Record Search', *Australian Government, National Archives of Australia*, 2017, Accessed: 6th April 2017, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=3032058>

<sup>26</sup> 'Lost Hospitals of London', 2017, Accessed: 4th May 2017, <http://ezitis.myzen.co.uk/croydonwar.html>

most of the men who weren't killed in action wouldn't have survived. The nurses were there to do their job and get on with it. They didn't always know what was happening in the war, but they knew men were getting injured and they had to care for them. The nurses couldn't be married but that didn't mean when they heard of anything that their heart didn't reach out to those men on the battlefield. What happened in the hospitals could be very confronting, but our ANZAC girls, including Ada had to be brave and do what they came to do... serve. Like the men the women sacrificed anything to serve their country. They worked through the harshest conditions. Ada fell ill, but still kept up the long hours to make sure the men would get better. She was committed to her job and each and every one of the patients she treated. The word mateship might look slightly different in the hospitals than out on the battlefield... but it was still there. It was between the nurses who worked 15 hours straight beside each other. It was between a nurse and those she was caring for. Ada wasn't just a nurse; she was someone who dedicated her time into each and every patient. Ada showed great courage every time she set foot in the hospital, especially after a long day's work when she was not only drained physically, but mentally too. Seeing somebodys jaw that's half blown up takes a lot of courage, but what takes more courage was to tell them everything's ok and begin to treat their injury. Ada worked every day for over a year, even when she was sick or tired. When she felt it was hopeless with men streaming in everyday or when she couldn't emotionally handle it anymore, she endured. She never stopped working. She sacrificed everything to help the wounded soldiers.<sup>2728</sup>



Figure 7 ANZAC Nurses, image, accessed 10th May,2017, <http://www.gallipoli.gov.au/nurses-at-gallipoli/images/christmas.jpg>

Ada Rose Alleyn died on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1950 at her late residence, 32 Esplanade, Semaphore. She was 67. She was cremated, West Terrace Cemetery.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Scott, L, Packard, F 2014, *ANZAC Girls*, DVD ABC.

<sup>28</sup> Rees, P 2008, *ANZAC GIRLS*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW. p 363.



Figure 8 ANZAC Graves , image, accessed 10th May, 2017, [https://rslvwm.s3.amazonaws.com/l/images/9748/photo/zoom\\_AIF\\_Section\\_-\\_West\\_Tce\\_Cemetery\\_-\\_looking\\_nth\\_at\\_Cross\\_of\\_Sacrifice\\_right\\_view\\_-\\_2015.jpg](https://rslvwm.s3.amazonaws.com/l/images/9748/photo/zoom_AIF_Section_-_West_Tce_Cemetery_-_looking_nth_at_Cross_of_Sacrifice_right_view_-_2015.jpg)

Rest in peace Ada.

## References

'World War 1: Snapshot of Australia at the time of the outbreak', ABC, 2014, Accessed: 10th April 2017, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-08-04/world-war-i-snapshot-australia-time-of-outbreak/5634632>

'Through These Lines: No.1 Australian General Hospital', Bernard & Cheryl, 2011, Accessed: 4th May 2017, <http://throughtheselines.com.au/research/1-AGH>

'Lost Hospitals of London', 2017, Accessed: 4th May 2017, <http://ezitis.myzen.co.uk/australiannurses.html>

'BBC Schools- Transport', BBC, 2017, Accessed: 5th May 2017, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1/25237882>

'WW1 Rouen and its base hospitals- WW1 Battlefield Tours: Australia, Canada, NZ, UK, USA', *Spirit Of Remembrance*, 2017, Accessed: 7th May 2017, <http://www.spiritofremembrance.com/page/ww1-rouen-and-its-base-hospitals>

'Wallaroo to Adelaide- Google search', Google, Accessed: 7th May 2017, <https://www.google.com.au/search?q=wallaroo+to+adelaide&oq=wallaroo+to+adelaide&ags=chrome..69i57j015.6159j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

'The Crescent Primary School to London- Google search', Google, Accessed: 7th May 2017, <https://www.google.com.au/search?q=croydon+to+london&oq=croydon+to+london&ags=chrome..69i57j015.4625j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#q=the+crescent+primary+school+croydon+to+london>

Burton, G, Caulfield, M, Clark, T, Goldie, D 2001, *Australians at War- Episode 2*, DVD ABC, Sydney.

Scott, L, Packard, F 2014, *ANZAC Girls*, DVD ABC.

'Record Search', Australian Government, National Archives of Australia, 2017, Accessed: 6th April 2017, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=3032058>

'Lost Hospitals of London', 2017, Accessed: 4th May 2017,  
<http://ezitis.myzen.co.uk/croydonwar.html>

Lambert, T 'A History of Adelaide, Australia', Accessed 4th May 2017,  
<http://www.localhistories.org/adelaide.html>

'RSL Virtual War Memorial | Ada Rose ALLEYN', *RSL Virtual War Memorial*,  
Accessed: 10th April 2017,  
<https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/280309>

'Our History | Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch)',  
*Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch)*, 2017, Accessed:  
2nd May 2017, <https://www.anmfsa.org.au/about-us/our-history/>

'FLOTILLA AUSTRALIA', *Flotilla Australia*, 2007, Accessed: 6th May 2017,  
<https://www.flotilla-australia.com/hmat.htm>  
Rees, P 2008, *ANZAC GIRLS*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW. p 363.

'Nursing Uniforms of Royal Adelaide Hospital 1890 to 1990 | Health Museum of South Australia', *Royal Adelaide Hospital*, 2014, Accessed: 2nd May 2017, <http://www.healthmuseumsa.org.au/histories/nursing-uniforms-of-royal-adelaide-hospital-1890-to-1990/>

*ANZAC Nurses*, image, accessed 10th May, 2017,  
<http://www.gallipoli.gov.au/nurses-at-gallipoli/images/christmas.jpg>