

# Matron Elizabeth Mosey

March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1880 – July 18<sup>th</sup> 1949

Served World War I & II

2<sup>nd</sup> Australian General Hospital



# 2019 Premier's ANZAC Spirit School Prize

## Central Yorke School Sophie Baker

*'Often overlooked, the nurses who volunteered for active service during World War 1 do not feature prominently in accounts of that bloody and tragic war.'*

*Jennifer King*

Elizabeth Mosey was born in Robertstown, South Australia, on the 23rd of March 1880 to parents John and Catherine Mary Mosey (Australian War Memorial, 2019). Raised on the family farm and thought to be home schooled by her mother, Elizabeth trained as a nurse at Burra Hospital in South Australia's Mid North (National Archives of Australia, 2019). Eager to serve her nation and its soldiers, Elizabeth enlisted on November 29th, 1914, at Adelaide, aged 36 (National Archives of Australia, 2019). Six days later, she left Melbourne on the 'HMAT A55 Kyrrah' (pictured right) bound for Alexandria (Australian Imperial Force Records, 2019, p. 13). After the onset of war in 1915, there were already 300 nurses in the Australian Army Nursing Service aboard a ship to Egypt (Memorial, Enlistment Statistics, First World War, 2019). Those aboard left Australia

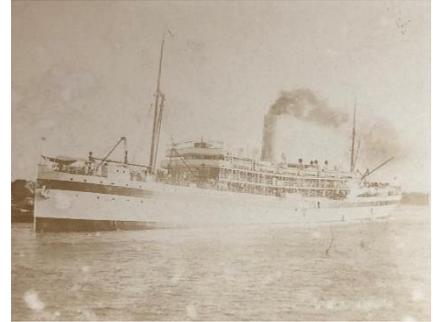


Elizabeth's homestead, Robertstown

with limited knowledge of their destination, or where their service would take them. One thing was certain, however, and this was that all aboard were destined for a grand overseas adventure (Rees, 2014, p. xvii).

Just like soldiers, nurses too had certain requirements they had to fulfil in order to enlist. One requirement was nurses could not be married, yet some married nurses still managed to enlist. This was never a problem for Elizabeth as she never got married or had children. Additionally, requirements meant that enlisted nurses were between the ages of 25 and 40 years old and they had to have obtained a minimum of three years training prior. Enlistment protocol meant that they had to serve for the duration on the war unless they were badly injured or got married (Smith, 2019).

Mosey disembarked the 'HMAT A55 Kyrrah' in Alexandria, Egypt on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 1915. During this time, nurses balanced their time between preparing hospitals and exploring the Great Pyramids and the Sphinx, while Australian soldiers trained nearby at Mena Camp. She served at the No. 2 Australian General Hospital (AGH) during the Gallipoli Campaign, Australia's first battle (Australian War Memorial, 2019). The Australian troops landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1915. The purpose of this battle was to take over the Dardanelles, to eventually get control over Turkey. This battle was described as 'a stalemate' because they weren't getting anywhere. They evacuated the battle eight months later (Battle of Gallipoli, 2019). No. 2 AGH treated those with more serious wounds that could not be dealt with at a Casualty Clearing Station. Often these wounds needed long term care and those rendered unfit for service would be invalided to Australia or Britain to recover (Smith, 2019).



On the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 1916, Elizabeth detached to an Australian Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) in France. Nurses at Casualty Clearing Stations dealt with ghastly injuries and wounds from soldiers straight off the field, yet they all had the courage to persevere: *'we practically never stopped. I was up for seventeen nights before I had a night in bed. A lot of the boys had legs blown off, or hastily amputated at the front-line'* (Tisdall, 2019).

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 1916, Mosey was admitted to the 4th Auxiliary Hospital in Cairo, suffering from the Mumps. Mumps was a virally infectious disease where the salivary glands swell up and can be life threatening. It's no surprise Mosey caught the Mumps, a condition that she likely treated soldiers for. She was discharged on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March and sailed to Wimeraux, France at the end of the month. Being the passionate woman she was, Mosey went back to work at No. 23 Australian General Hospital until the 17<sup>th</sup> of June and then returned to No. 2 Australian General Hospital, Egypt, later in September.



Elizabeth treating injured soldiers

After her ongoing service for almost two years, Elizabeth went on leave to England for two weeks. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 1916 she reported for duty with No. 1 Australian Army Hospital at Harefield. Two days later she was admitted sick to the Australian Nurses home at St Albans. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, Elizabeth was promoted from staff nurse to nursing sister.

Mosey went and treated men from the battle of Ypres and Messines at No. 1 Casualty Clearing Station (National Archives of Australia, 2019). The Battle of Ypres was fought by the allies against the German empire located on the Western Front. This battle was arduous for soldiers as the mud was one metre thick, many died of gas poisoning and the trenches were covered in rats. Nurses at a CCS were the first to treat injuries who were either operated on or worse cases were sent to a General Hospital: *'time was of the essence ... Every man is as he was carried out of the trenches in his wet khaki and stone cold'* (Rees, 2014, pg. 190). Due to the volume of patients they often ran out of beds for the wounded men: *'every available space held a stretcher ... Then the stretchers had to be placed outside everywhere imaginable, and to add to their misery a drizzly rain fell'* (Payne 2019). Nurses also had to be emotionally strong as they couldn't save the lives of many patients and their close location to the front line meant there was the constant threat of bombing or shelling: *'they were, themselves, in danger from aerial bombardment, long-range artillery and gas'* (Hallet, 2019). Sheard noted the tumultuous moment that was an aerial raid: *'Everyone dashed for the slit trenches near their huts for five hours until an aerial torpedo hit the camp'* (2019, p.164).

After the battle of Ypres Elizabeth returned to 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital and stayed here until the last guns were fired. The Armistice was a feeling of gladness for most nurses but also sadness. To think the four year conflict was over was a great relief, but many nurses never recovered from the mental and physical stresses of war. It was almost impossible to believe the



war was over: *'Our past lives – 'before the war' – slip from our Armistice was celebrated at the memory like reality from the minds of those that dream. Our Victory Ball, Harefield Hospital. future – 'when the war is over' – the mind refuses to grasp. There seems no other life'* (Ashton, 1915, pg.450).

Nurses would think of all the lives they saved but more, the men who weren't returning home.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1920, Elizabeth set sail back to Australia aboard *'City of Exeter'* (pictured right). She disembarked from Adelaide on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February and was discharged from the AANS on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June. Mosey wasn't thinking of returning to civilian nursing, but she signed up to the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force for service. She embarked from



Sydney aboard *SS Marsina* on 16 April 1921, taking up her post at the hospital in Rabaul shortly after. On 13 November she became Matron of the Hospital. She returned to Australia in May and then returned to Rabaul. Following her service in Rabaul, she began nursing in Asia:

*'Just prior to the Second World War, Mosey was working as a volunteer nurse in Hong Kong. When war broke out and the Japanese invaded, she was trapped along with the civilian populace. She spent the next six years tending to the people of Hong Kong. Following the war, she returned to Australia and in 1947 was created a Member of the Order of the British Empire for her service to the people of Japanese occupied Hong Kong.'*

(Australian War Memorial, 2019) On the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 1949 Elizabeth passed away in Ceylon, aged 73.

***'By war's end, having faced the dangers and demands of wartime nursing and taken on new responsibilities and practices, nurses had proved to be essential to military medical service.'***

**(Siers, 2019)**

The ANZAC nurses who served throughout World War 1 encompassed the virtues of courage and perseverance on a daily basis as they navigated uncharted territory for the nursing profession. Courage and perseverance work hand in hand as you must be brave to continue to persist under adverse conditions. Elizabeth's efforts, along with her comrades, reflected these values and pioneered the way for nurse involvement in the army. It takes a great deal of courage to nurse the wounded men and comfort them in moments of distress, let alone be the first to give medical attention, as was the case on a Casualty Clearing Station. These nurses volunteered to witness the worst of war's trauma and did so with care and devotion. During her time at Casualty Clearing Stations, Elizabeth endured many sleepless nights and worked long hours in appalling conditions. She faced the constant threat of bombing, shelling and gas attacks from the enemy as well as poor sanitation, food and medical resources. To serve in these conditions day after day required a great deal of perseverance and courage, and this ensured soldiers received the best care possible. They did so with little recognition, and condescending, demeaning treatment from senior officers within the army. However, the soldiers valued and acknowledged the service of these brave, resilient nurses: *'We were bombed nightly, and I don't know how you stick it like you do - the sleepless life, the reeking atmosphere and everything. I say, "Three cheers and a tiger for our brave little sisters." We know and appreciate the work you do and love you for your bravery and endurance'* (Tilton, 1917).

As shown on the left, Mosey was recognised for her efforts with medals. She received the Royal Red Cross

Second Class (pictured right), Member of the British Empire, 1914-1915 Star, British War Medal 1914-20 and a British War Medal *'She was awarded the Royal Red Cross Second Class for; 'Most distinguished and devoted services to the sick and wounded, especially those of the Battle of Messines and of the 3rd and 4th Battles of Ypres, and upon all occasions'* (Australian War Memorial, 2019). The presentation for this medal was made by King George V at Buckingham Palace. Elizabeth was awarded the Member of the British Empire when an armed Japanese party attempted to enter her hospital and she refused to allow them to enter.



Elizabeth served for 33 years of her life. She was truly made to be a nurse, she never got married, had children or just lived an ordinary life. Despite falling ill twice throughout her wartime service, Mosey persevered and not once thought about returning home. Her heart was set on caring for the soldiers and making sure the medical facilities had nothing but the best. Almost every nurse was the same, they were the most selfless and courageous people on earth. As the years go on will our knowledge of the nurses who served grow or remain unknown? The nurses who served throughout World War I proved to be essential to military medical service and exemplified the four qualities of the Anzac Spirit.

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6/2/15

Madam,

I am directed to inform you that Her Majesty Queen Alexandra has expressed a wish that all Ladies who attended an Investiture at Buckingham Palace to receive the decoration of the Royal Red Cross should afterwards proceed to Marlborough House to see Her Majesty.

I am accordingly to request that you will attend at Marlborough House ~~on 4/11/15, at 12 noon~~ on your return from Buckingham Palace.

I am,

Madam,

Your obedient servant,

Sister Elizabeth Hooley, A.R.C.  
Q.A.N.S.

14, Quail Ave. Hoep.

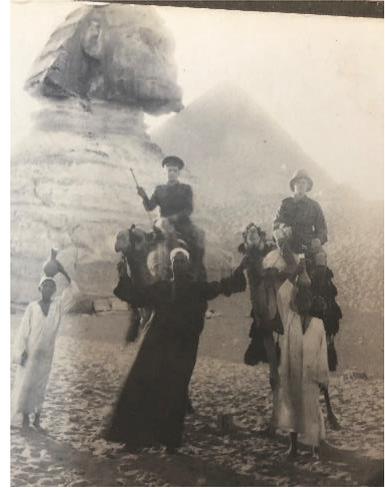
Havefield

Shedd'n.

L.P. Holland



Elizabeth's medallions recognized her service.



Riding Camels at the Sphinx

Invitation for Elizabeth's Medal Ceremony with Queen Elizabeth II

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