

Entry type: Organisation
Entry ID: AWE0408

Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS)

(1902 - 1948)

Born	19020701
Died	19481101
Occupation	Armed services organisation

Summary

The Australian Army Nursing Service, which was actually a reserve, was established on 1 July 1902. The Service was staffed by volunteer civilian nurses who would be available for duty during times of national emergency. Members of the Service served in both the World Wars, staffing medical facilities in Australia and overseas. In 1949 the Service became part of the Australian Regular Army and is now known as the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC).

IMPORTANT – Additional information about how to search for your own relative’s records can be found below. Click on details and scroll to the end.

Details

Prior to Australia's Federation in 1901, each colony controlled its own defence force, of which the nursing services formed a part. In July 1902 the nursing services of each colony joined together to form the Australian Army Nursing Service. The Service which was part of the Australian Army Medical Corps was made up of volunteer trained nurses who were willing to serve in times of a national emergency.

At the outbreak of World War I staff were recruited from both the nursing service and the civilian workforce. They served at field and base hospitals in Australia as well as in Egypt, England, France, Belgium, Greece, Salonika, Palestine, Mesopotamia and India. After the war the Australian Army Nursing Service returned to a reserve status.

The Australian Army Nursing Service was one of only two women's services (the other being Voluntary Aid Detachments) that were active at the outbreak of war in 1939. Initially the enlisted nurses were the only females to serve outside Australia. Members served in England, Egypt, Palestine, Libya, Greece, Syria, Ceylon, Malaya, Singapore, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Island as well as throughout Australia. They served on hospital ships, troop transports, base and camp hospitals and some spent time in Prisoner of War camps.

After the war members served as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan. In July 1947 members of the Australian Army Nursing Service were transferred to the Interim Army, and in November 1948 the Service was designated a 'Royal' one. In July 1949 the Royal Australian Army Nursing Service became part of the Australian Regular Army. In February 1951 the Service became a Corps and is known as the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC). The Pledge of Service was introduced during World War Two.

AANS Pledge of Service

I pledge myself loyally
to serve my King and Country
and to maintain the honour and efficiency
of the Australian Army Nursing Service.
I will do all in my power
to alleviate the suffering of
the sick and wounded, sparing no
effort to bring them comfort of body
and peace of mind.
I will work in unity and
comradeship with my fellow nurses.
I will be ready to give assistance
to those in need of my help,
and will abstain from any action
which may bring sorrow
and suffering to others.
At all times I will endeavour
to uphold the highest traditions of
Womanhood and of the Profession
of which I am Part.

HELPFUL INFORMATION TO ASSIST YOUR OWN SEARCHES

The following information will assist you to search for Australian women who served in WW1, not women from any other country, and not WW2 servicewomen. If you are looking for a nurse in the Australian Army Nursing Service, go online to the National Archives and find the person's army file there. If you need help after doing this, then contact this page via the comments – but only after you have gone to the National Archives of Australia for advice. www.naa.gov.au

If looking for women who served in WW2, go here to find out if they did, in fact serve:

<http://www.ww2roll.gov.au/>

Then go to this site to find their personnel record

<http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/explore/defence/service-records/index.aspx>

There is an article written by Dr Kirsty Harris published in *Ancestor: The Journal of the Royal Genealogical Society of Victoria* this year that provides some search tips. 'Researching Australian World War 1 Nurses' can be found Vol 31, Issue 1 of the 2012 edition of the journal.

Published resources

Book

A brief record of the Australian Army Nursing Service, 1939-1945, [1985?].

Captives: Australian army nurses in Japanese prison camps, Kenny, Catherine, 1962-, 1986

Desert, bamboo and barbed wire: the 1939-45 story of a special detachment of Australian Army nursing sisters, fondly known as the "Angels in Grey" and their fate in war and captivity, Murphy, Frances, 1983

Extracts from regulations and orders; seniority list, Army Nursing Services, Australian Imperial Force, 1917

The grey battalion, Tilton, May, 1933

The Khiva nursery, 1917

Lest we forget: Australian Army Nursing Service, Wellesley-Smith, Annette, 1944

The reflections of an old grey mare: a salute to those who served, Underwood, Polly, 1987

The Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps : an outline of the foundation and development of the Australian Army Nursing Service, 1953?

Seniority list (provisional), Australian Army Nursing Service, 1918

Seniority nursing services, Australian Imperial Force, 1915

Standing orders for the Australian Army Nursing Service, 1944

Thursday Island Nurse, Burchill, Elizabeth, 1972

With the AANS: 1939-1945, Eadie, Edith D. K.; Australia Remembers 1945-1995 S.A. Committee, 1995

Australian nurses since Nightingale 1860-1990, Burchill, Elizabeth, 1992

Australian women at war, Adam-Smith, Patsy, 1984

Guns and brooches : Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War, Bassett, Jan, 1992

Army nursing services: Australian Imperial Force and Australian Military Forces., Australian Imperial Force (1914-1921), 1916

The Australian Army Nursing Service: a short history with World War One nominal roll and award citations, Smith, Neil C, 1996

Australian Imperial Force: order for nursing service, Australian Imperial Force, 2nd (1939-1946), 1914

The Australian Army: A History of its Organisation 1901-2001, Palazzo, Albert, 2001

Colonel Best and her soldiers: The Story of the 33 years of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps, Ollif, Lorna, 1985

Just wanted to be there : Australian Service Nurses 1899-1999, Reid, Richard, 1999

Nightingales in the mud : the digger sisters of the Great War 1914 - 1918, Barker, Marianne, 1989

White Coolies, Jeffrey, Betty, 1954

A Woman's war : the exceptional life of Wilma Oram Young, AM, Angell, Barbara, 2003

Thesis

Jessie Tomlins: an Australian nurse, World War One, Rae, Ruth, 2001,
<http://setis.library.usyd.edu.au/~thesis/adt-NU/public/adt-NU20020222.160609/>

Resource Section

Australian Servicewomen's Memorial, Southwell-Keely, Michael, 1999,
<http://www.skp.com.au/memorials/pages/00018.htm>

Unsung heroes : Australia's military medical personnel, Australian War Memorial,
<http://www.awm.gov.au/1918/medical/>

Nurses : "The roses of no man's land", Australian War Memorial,
<http://www.awm.gov.au/1918/medical/nurses.htm>

Resource

Archival resources

Australian War Memorial, Research Centre

[\[Recommendation file for honours and awards, AIF, 1914-18 War\] Australian Army Nursing Service 6.10.1918?](#)[\[Recommendation file for honours and awards, AIF, 1914-18 War\] Australian Army Nursing Service 6.10.1918 \(Recommendations for the Royal Red Cross\)](#)

[\[Recommendation file for honours and awards, AIF, 1914-18 War\] Australian Army Nursing Service 11.9.1918 to 24.9.1918](#)

[\[Recruiting - Arrangements:\] Australian Military Forces - Instructions for the Medical Examination of Recruits. A\) For Mobilization B\) AIF C\) For Garrison Battalions D\) AANS \[Australian Army Nursing Service\] 1940](#)

[Operation clean up DPR/TV/566](#)

[Archbishop Daniel Mannix, Catholic Chaplain General of the Australian Army with three unidentified representatives from the Australian Army Nursing Service \(AANS\), Women's ...](#)

[Colour patch : Australian Army Nursing Service, AIF](#)

[Hospital tent of 3rd Australian General Hospital](#)

[Balcony of troopers' ward, 14th Australian General Hospital, Abbassia](#)

[A group of Australian Army Nursing Service nurses at the 52nd British General Hospital at Kalamaria](#)

[Group portrait of Australian Army Nursing Service \(AANS\) nurses, who were former prisoners of war \(POWs\), ob board the hospital ship Manunda on its arrival in Australia](#)

[Holmes, Katie Ms - Thesis "Between the lines: the letters and diaries of First World War Australian Nurses".](#)

[Army Women's Services](#)

Author Details

Anne Heywood

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