

# The Australian Women's Register

---

**Entry type:** Person

**Entry ID:** AWE0474

## Snelling, Joyce Mary

(1904 - 1988)

---

**Born** 15 December, 1904, Sydney New South Wales Australia

---

**Died** 13 November, 1988, Mona Vale New South Wales Australia

---

**Occupation** Servicewoman

---

### Summary

Mrs Joyce Snelling, who enlisted in the Australian Army in 1942, had previously been the Voluntary Aid Commandant of the Scottish Detachment No. 9218 (which was affiliated with the New South Wales Scottish Regiment), was commissioned as a Lieutenant and organised the first Voluntary Aid training school at Ingleburn. In April 1942 Mrs Snelling was appointed Assistant Controller and Honorary Secretary of the Joint State Council whose membership included the Order of St John and the Australian Red Cross Society and held this post until her enlistment in the Army. Lt Joyce Snelling served at Victoria Barracks where she attained the rank of Major on 28 February 1943 when she became Assistant Controller Australian Army Medical Women's Service NSW Lines of Communication Area.

In 1950 Major Snelling was elected President of the Ex-AAMWS Association and held this position for 25 years. She was a Vice-Patron of the Association and a life member. From 1966 until 1973 she was President of the Ex-AAMWS Association of NSW.

On 1 January 1972 Joyce Snelling was appointed to the Order of the British Empire – Member (Civil) for her service to ex-servicewomen.

## Details

Originally from the suburb of Mosman, Joyce Snelling was known as Joyce Mary Holden. She was preparing for her career in the Army when she was just 18 as she gathered together a group of young Voluntary Aids to practice marching in the Rocks area in Sydney – to the tune of a hand-cranked gramophone set up in a wheelbarrow, pushed along as they marched.

In 1939 Joyce Snelling was the founder and Commandant of the Scottish Detachment No. 9218 which was affiliated with the New South Wales Scottish Regiment with whom her husband was an officer.

Later in April 1942, Mrs Snelling was appointed the Assistant Controller and Honorary Secretary of the Joint State Council of NSW and held this post until she enlisted in the Army in September 1942. She was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant and organised the first Army Voluntary Aid (VA) training school at Ingleburn.

After enlisting in the Army Joyce Snelling served at Victoria Barracks where she attained the rank of Major on 28 February 1943, when she became Assistant Controller AAMWS NSW Lines of Communication Area.

Major Snelling coordinated the departure of the 2/12th Australian General Hospital Vas for Colombo in 1941; the large draft which left for New Guinea in 1943 to join the 2/1st, 2/5th and 2/9th AGHs; the draft of 2/8th AAMWS bound for Jacquinot Bay, New Britain; the 2/1st AAMWS who went to Torokina on Bougainville and the 118th AAMWS who were sent to Rabaul. Finally after the cessation of hostilities Major Snelling was involved with the departure of another group of AAMWS who were sent to Japan to care for soldiers serving with the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces in 1946.

Sadly Major Snelling's husband was one of the casualties of the Malayan campaign who did not return to Australia. When she was interviewed by the Melbourne *Argus* in October 1944 she told the reporter that she had not heard from him since the fall of Singapore. She said her husband always commended her for being a good homemaker and hostess but he was reluctant to see her as a working wife. She added that she didn't know what he would think if he knew she was in the AAMWS!

In 1944 Major Snelling's two daughters, aged 11 and 13 years respectively, who were boarders at a girls' school in NSW, were able to see their mother at the small flat she had near their school at weekends. So that she could spend time with them on their holidays she saved her leave whenever she could.

Major Snelling's command included some AAMWS in her area and she thought they were a fine group of women. It didn't matter what background they had come from, they all worked together and she felt that they were all going to be better women because of the levelling influence of Army life. Military life taught them about tolerance and community spirit.

Major Snelling was demobilised on the 10 January 1947 but continued to serve as a part-time officer until 1950. She was farewelled by many of her serving and ex-officers at the Wentworth Hotel on 9 January 1947.

In 1950 Major Snelling was elected President of the Ex-AAMWS Association and she held this position for 25 years. She was a Vice-Patron of the Association and a life member.

In recognition of her association with the Red Cross and the Voluntary Aid movement Joyce Snelling received the Queen's Bar Brooch. She served as Honorary Secretary to the Joint State Council of the Red Cross and St John Ambulance. Briefly she was President of the War Widow's Guild of Australia – NSW and Korean War Auxiliary. For her service to ex-servicewomen Joyce Snelling was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 1972.

Joyce Snelling died suddenly at her home at Mona Vale on 13 November 1988 and a memorial plaque was unveiled in her memory at the Garrison Church on Sunday 25 February 1990.

## Published resources

### Book

From blue to khaki: The enlisted voluntary aids and others who became members of the Australian Army Medical Women's Service and served from 1942-1951, Mount-Batten, Betty J, 1995

### Resource Section

SNELLING, JOYCE MARY, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2002,  
<http://www.wv2roll.gov.au/script/veteran.asp?ServiceID=A&VeteranID=245279>

### Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

## Archival resources

### **Australian War Memorial, Research Centre**

[Honours and Awards - Recommendations for New Year Honours List 1946](#)

[End of War Awards - submissions by \[Quartermaster-General and Director-General of Medical Services\]](#)

[Officers at the Conference of Assistant and Deputy Assistant Controllers, Australian Army Medical Women's Service.](#)

[Officers at the conference of Assistant and Deputy Assistant Controllers, Australian Army Medical Women's Service](#)

### **National Archives of Australia, National Office, Canberra**

[SNELLING JOYCE MARY : Service Number - NX138446 : Date of birth - 15 Dec 1904 : Place of birth - SYDNEY NSW : Place of enlistment - NSW L OF C NSW : Next of Kin - SNELLING R](#)

### **National Library of Australia**

[\[Biographical cuttings on Joyce Snelling, Major, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals\]](#)

### **National Archives of Australia, Melbourne Office**

[Army Medical & Dental Corps. Nurses and Specialists \[Applications for a Commission in the A.A.M.C. Voluntary Aid Detachments \(V.A.D.\)\] - J M Snelling \[Box 69\]](#)

### **Author Details**

Anne Heywood

**Created** 1 April 2003

**Last modified** 29 October 2018