Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE5398

Gallagher, Evelyn Melita

(1877 - 1946)

Born	18770612, Browns Flat New South Wales Australia
Died	19460719, Burwood New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Army Nurse, Nurse

Summary

Evelyn Gallagher served from 1916 to 1919 with the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) in World War I in India, Egypt and England. She was one of three female Gallagher family members from Browns Flat, a farming settlement between Queanbeyan and Bungendore in New South Wales later part of the ACT, who served overseas as nurses in World War I. After the war she was matron of a private hospital at Nowra.

Details

Evelyn Melita Gallagher, often known as Eva, was born on 12 June 1877 at Browns Flat, a farming settlement near Burbong between Queanbeyan and Bungendore, NSW, now in Kowen Forest within the eastern border of the ACT. She was the youngest daughter of John Gallagher, farmer, and Mary Ann Gallagher (born Craig) and a younger sister of Flora Gallagher and aunt of Janet Gallagher, who both also served as nurses overseas in World War I. Evelyn reached the rank of Charge Sister while serving in India.

Evelyn Gallagher trained at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney and was registered as a trained nurse on 6 August 1909. From 1913 she was on the Australian Army Nursing Service reserve but apparently waited to enlist until her niece Janet Gallagher, who had been raised as her sister, was qualified and they could enlist together. She and Janet enlisted on 13 June 1916 in Sydney after both had been nursing for nearly three months at 4th Australian General Hospital (AGH), the military hospital in Randwick. When she enlisted Evelyn gave her age as 31 but was probably 38; she was a Catholic and she named her mother Mary Ann Gallagher as her next of kin.

She was among several hundred Australian nurses sent to India at the request of the British Government to nurse in military hospitals in India. As a result many were staffed mainly by Australian nurses who cared initially for sick and wounded evacuated from Mesopotamia, until facilities could be established near the fighting and for British troops of the Indian Garrison. The Australians enlisted following a call to nurses serving in Australian military hospitals while waiting for a chance to volunteer. They were assured that because of the severe Indian climate they would serve there only for six months and then be sent to nurse Australian troops in France or England which is what they wanted to do. This did not eventuate. Many of their patients in India were victims of tropical diseases. Two Australian nurses died of cholera in India.

Evelyn travelled on RMS Kashgar arriving in Bombay on 27 September 1916 and was sent to nurse at the 1000-bed Gerard Freeman Thomas Hospital in Bombay. In May 1917 she was promoted from Staff Nurse to Sister and posted to Deccan War Hospital, a 1500-bed hospital at Poona. At the beginning of 1918 she was transferred to the 100-bed Station Hospital at Belgaum about 500 km south of Bombay and promoted to Charge Sister. Station hospitals were maintained by the Indian Government and were often poorly equipped. Their patients were mainly sufferers from tropical diseases including cholera, dysentery and plague.

Evelyn Gallagher remained at Belgaum until towards the end of September when she was transferred to Egypt and posted to the 31st British General Hospital (BGH) at Abbassia until the end of the year. Early in 1919 she moved to England where she nursed briefly at 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital (AAH) at Southall before being sent to 1AGH at Sutton Veny in Wiltshire, a holding hospital for patients waiting to return to Australia, which also treated many victims of the Spanish flu pandemic.

In July 1919 Evelyn left to return to Australia on HMAT Orsova on duty and landed in Sydney on 6 September 1919. She was discharged in Sydney on 23 October 1919 with the rank of Sister. She received the British War Medal and Victory Medal and is commemorated on the ACT Memorial and the City of Queanbeyan Roll of Remembrance.

After the war Evelyn Gallagher was matron of Bridge Road Private Hospital in Nowra, NSW where she nursed until close to her death at Burwood in Sydney on 19 July 1946. She is buried in the Catholic cemetery, Rookwood.

Published resources

Site Exhibition
Canberra Women in World War I: Community at Home, Nurses Abroad, Clarke, Patricia and Francis, Niki, 2015, http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/cww1

Resource Section
Gallagher, Evelyn Melita, 2013,
http://nurses.ww1anzac.com/ga.html

Book
The Long Travail, Gallagher, N. J., 1987

With Horse and Morse in Mesopotamia: The story of the Anzacs in Asia -The Australian Nurses in India, Burke, Keast (ed.), 1927

Book Section
Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services 1914-18. Vol. III: Problems and Services, Butler, A.G., 1943

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Archives of Australia, National Office, Canberra
Gallagher Evelyn Melita : SERN Staff Nurse : POB Queanbeyan NSW : POE N/A : NOK M Gallagher Mary Ann

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