Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE4794

Edis, Margaret Dorothy

(1890 - 1981)

Born	18900419
Died	19810814
Occupation	Nurse educator

Summary

Margaret Edis trained at the Coolgardie Hospital and served in both World Wars; after World War II she held a number of senior administrative positions and was awarded an MBE and the Florence Nightingale Medal.

Details

Margaret Edis was born in Kyabram, Victoria and moved to Kalgoorlie in 1896. Her early memories were of the lack of water, then the garden competitions after the Mundaring to Kalgoorlie pipeline was completed in 1903. She also describes elaborate picnics to Bardoc, north of Kalgoorlie, in the wildflower season and singing and dancing classes. Her first experience of the medical profession was a three day stay in hospital with tonsillitis when “the nurses put me in a cap and took me round with them and I was fascinated by it”. When she left school she attended a talk by the matron of the Kalgoorlie Government Hospital who suggested she become a nurse.

Margaret began her training at the Coolgardie hospital in 1911 where she was initially told she “would never make the grade” and was in trouble for refusing to eat her porridge on her first day. She worked in the TB ward where she was not allowed to speak to the patients, and then transferred to the Northam and Albany hospitals before returning to Kalgoorlie to continue her training.

On 10 August, 1915, at the age of 25, she enlisted in the Australian Army Nursing Service and was sent initially to Egypt, later nursing on the Western Front. Her unit was so close to the front line that at one time they found themselves in no-man’s land during a night-time Allied retreat. After the war Margaret took a midwifery and child welfare course at King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women in Perth, specialising in the care of premature babies. With another war, she was called up in July 1940 and served as principal matron, Western Command (Western Australian Lines of Communication Area) until April 1943. Ten years later she was awarded an MBE “in recognition of her outstanding public service in the interests of persons suffering from incurable diseases”. In 1965, a year before her retirement, she was awarded the Florence Nightingale medal by the International Committee of the Red Cross. As president (1945-1950) of the Western Australian branch of the Australian Trained Nurses’ Association, she helped to establish (1949) the College of Nursing, Australia. She was also State president of the Trained Nurses’ Guild (1947-1949) and of the Australian United Nurses’ Association (1949-1953), and served (1943-1953) on the Nurses’ Registration Board. Margaret Edis died in Perth on 14 August, 1981.

Published resources

Site Exhibition
Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html

Karlkurla Gold: A History of the Women of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Criena Fitzgerald and National Foundation for Australian Women, 2012,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/wikb/wikb-home.html

Resource Section
Edis, Margaret Dorothy (Dot) (1890 - 1981), Gare, Deborah, 2007,
http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/edis-margaret-dorothy-dot-12453/text22397

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

State Library of Western Australia
[Interview with Margaret Dorothy Edis, nurse] [sound recording]

National Archives of Australia, National Office, Canberra
First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1914-1920

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