Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0418

Pocock, Mary Anne (Bessie)

(1863 - 1946)

Born	20 July, 1863, Dalby Queensland Australia
Died	16 July, 1946, Grafton New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Nurse, Servicewoman

Summary

A member of the New South Wales Army Nursing Service Reserve (NSWANSR), Bessie Pocock served in the Boer War. She was awarded the Queen's and the King's South Africa medals and mentioned in despatches. Once again Pocock enlisted in the defence force at the outbreak of World War I. Serving in Cairo and Ismailia (Egypt) Pocock was later a matron on hospital ships. On 2 May 1916 Bessie Pocock was awarded the Royal Red Cross Medal (2nd class) for her service with the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS).

Details

Before commencing her nursing training at Sydney Hospital in 1890, Bessie Pocock worked as a domestic. Upon completion she joined the hospital staff as a Sister. In 1899 Pocock became a member of the New South Wales Army Nursing Service Reserve (NSWANSR) and served in the Boer War being posted to hospitals in London, Johannesburg and Middleburg. She was mentioned in despatches and awarded the Queen's and the King's South Africa medals. After the war she returned to her position at the Sydney Hospital. From 1907 until 1911 Bessie became matron of the Newcastle Hospital and later (1911-1914) at Gladesville.

During World War I Pocock served with the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in hospitals at Cairo and Ismailia (Egypt). She was then matron of the Hospital Ship *Assaye* before being stationed at Marseilles and Wimereux (France), followed by Trois Arbres (Belgium), and then Boulogne and England. On 2 May 1916 Sister Bessie Pocock was awarded the Royal Red Cross Medal (2nd class) and she had been twice mentioned in despatches.

After the war Pocock returned to Gladesville Hospital as matron. Before retiring she set up a convalescent hospital at Chatswood called 'Ismailia.' She remained an active member of the Australasian Trained Nurses' Association of which she became a life member as well as the Australian Army Nursing Service Reserve.

Bessie Pocock never married and was looked after by her nieces until she died on 16 July 1946.

Published resources

Resource Section

Pocock, Mary Anne (Bessie) (1863-1946), McCarthy, Perditta M., 2006,
http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110256b.htm

Australian nurses in the Boer War, Chamberlain, Max, 2002,
http://users.netconnect.com.au/~ianmac/readroom.htm#nursing

Book

The Diggers : makers of the Australian military tradition, Coulthard-Clark, Chris, 1993

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

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Archives of Australia, Various Locations

Nominal rolls and lists of medals and clasps for New South Wales Military Forces who served in Boer War

NULL

Nursing sisters, including Sister Mary A. (Bessie) Pocock (far left, back row), mounted on camels in front of the sphinx

Author Details

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