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[955]



Egypt  
France

Dr G. Collins

53  
32

Nov 1915 "Orsona" 108 sisters  
at Cairo divided between  
No 1 and No 2 A.S.H.

To 27<sup>th</sup> British General, Abbasia  
splendidly kept and organized  
dysentery cases.

France 25<sup>th</sup> British Gen  
Repulse him off duty always  
given.

at C.E.S., Zuydeville, July 1917  
fearful bombing.

● Lived working with British  
sisters.

The Official War Historian of the Commonwealth  
Government (Dr. C. E. W. Bean), after his study of the  
collection of private war records preserved in the Australian  
War Memorial Library, wrote:—

"The private diaries in this collection furnish some of its most  
valuable historical records, but, like all private memoirs which were  
not compiled with any historical purpose, they should not be  
regarded as first-hand evidence except where it is certain that they  
are so. The diarist is almost always sincere in his desire to record  
accurately, but he is subject to no obligation or inducement to  
indicate whether he is recording his own observations or incidents  
told him by friends or heard at third or fourth hand at the mess-table.  
Thus, in some of the diaries in this collection, scenes described with  
vivid detail, and without any warning that they are told at second  
or third hand, have been found to be completely inaccurate in  
important details. A certain number also have been written up  
or revised long after the events, though doubtless usually from notes  
made at the time. In most cases the student must rely on his  
experience and on internal evidence to guide him in judging what is  
and what is not likely to be historically accurate."



CCS <sup>9</sup> <sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup>  
Callan

Egypt 12.11.15 - 16.1.17 France 22.17 - 30.1.19

53.32  
53  
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With a number of other Sisters numbering about 108 I sailed from Melbourne on the "Orsova" Nov. 12<sup>th</sup> 1915.

Our trip was uneventful as we only called at Fremantle & Aden for coal.

We reached Suez on Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> 1915 journeyed to Cairo the same day.

We were divided, some being sent to No 1 A.G.H. & some to No 2 A.G.H.

I was sent to No 1 at Helwan & remained there until it closed on March 29<sup>th</sup> 1916. Then reported for duty to Luna Park.

My first work was the "Joy Wheel" evidently intended as "open air treatment" for septic cases, as there were only septic wounds.

These patients were evacuated to Australia & my next work was the gallery of the Station mess. Our patients here were all convalescing waiting to return home.

While at this hospital there was an opportunity given of a trip to Luxor, with 10 other Sisters I availed myself of it & thought it well worth while.

When Luna Park closed I was sent to No 27 British General Hospital.

This hospital was the cleanest & most perfectly kept one I ever saw. The O.C. did a round of



inspection every evening between 6 & 7 p.m.  
I was believe any one whose wound  
was unclean or had a speck of  
dust or green spots on it.

My duties were in the dispensary  
ward, the cases were acute, but  
made good recoveries, we had one  
death in the ward the 4 weeks  
I was there.

Careful attention was paid to  
the diet, there was a V. A. D. kitchen  
where any little extras required  
were made.

● Our time off duty at this hospital  
was 3 hrs a day, one 1/2 day a week  
& one whole day a month, as I was  
there over 4 weeks I did not get  
the day.

Just about this time there was  
some fighting down the Pacific & all  
Australian sisters at the British  
hospital were recalled to No 3 A.G.H.  
At this hospital I did 5 weeks night  
● duty in a surgical ward, the work  
was very interesting but the patients  
were soon evacuated, those that  
were left recovered very quickly.

Then No 3 closed & left for Eng.  
This time I was sent to Chongra  
infection hospital. Four months I spent  
at this hospital, nearly all the  
sisters left Aus. on the same boat  
as myself, so we knew each other  
fairly well & were very happy together.  
We were not what you would call  
nurses with work, with the  
exception of a few weeks, I was on



only in the diphtheria ward, here we were kept going, there were also a lot of cases of Loupili.

From Chebra we all had a week's leave to Alexandria & enjoyed the sea breezes & bathing after the same & heat of Cairo.

Life at Chebra was much enjoyed every one united to make it as happy a time as possible for all.

At this time there were constant rumours of our leaving Egypt. & on 16.1.17 it became a reality for that morning we, 26 of the staff left Cairo for Alexandria on a hospital train, tea & sandwiches were provided on the train.

It was good bye to the east with its Pyramids, Sphinx, Nile, Darters Buffalo & Camels, we almost felt sad at the thought of not seeing them again, much as we longed for England & France.

At Alexandria we boarded the hospital ship "Esquibo".

We sighted Malin in the distance, got glimpses of the Sth. Coast of France anchored out for  $3\frac{1}{4}$  hr. off Gibraltar, the coast of Spain was interesting, especially Trafalga Bay. We saw the destroyers patrolling along the coast as we passed.

In 10 days time we landed at Southampton & were soon in London. After some days in London getting our camp kits & warm clothes we left for France, arrived 8. 2, 17



4

Here we were sent to the Breton  
Hospitals - With three other Sisters  
I was sent to 25<sup>th</sup> Gen. at Hardelais.

We left Boulogne by ambulance &  
appeared to be travelling over endless  
miles of snow, in reality it was  
about 9 miles.

This hospital was chiefly under  
Canvas & was very close to the  
sea in fact in the same - miles

Consequently we got the sea  
breezes with a vengeance, they  
were bitterly cold just then.

The Marquises were used for  
skin cases & the work was trying  
in the extreme under the conditions  
of such cold & lack of heating.

The route to Hardelais was so  
bad that it was difficult at  
times to bring coal all the way  
out. In the dressing there we  
had braziers, which were beautiful  
for warming but the fumes were  
very disagreeable.

At this time the staff were  
all imperial sisters - the hrs off  
duty were the usual in Breton  
hospitals regular time was always  
given.

While here I have the misfortune  
to get sick & was sent to the  
Chateau Maricain at Wammereau  
sick leave to Bay, followed spent  
at "Glen Almon" St. Albans.

I cannot speak highly enough of  
the comfort of this place & many thanks  
are due to Mr. M<sup>r</sup>. Durand for his



This beautiful home for Convalescent  
Aus. Sisters.

After 3 weeks I returned to Hordelot  
Some weeks after this the nursing  
staff was changed, Australian  
nurses & sisters took over from  
the Imperials.

After 5 weeks at No 25 Gen. Order  
Camp for 36 C.C.S. British,  
my friends & I have been together  
since leaving Australia & I have  
to thank the Officers. Nurses under  
whom I have worked for this.

● Together we left for C.C.S. where  
we arrived on July 30<sup>th</sup> 1917.

This C.C.S. was at Zuydcoote about  
10 miles north of Dunkirk on the  
Coast. At this place there is a  
large Sanatorium for tubercular  
children - It is facing the sea &  
has a promenade the length of the  
building built up on the sand.

● The french occupied the greater  
part of this building, as a General  
hospital,

The C.C.S. occupied three large  
pavilions & another wing with a  
hall & bath & shower rooms.

Apart from these we had the  
usual huts used in C.C. Stations.

Over the first few days we spent  
in equipping the wards,

Our first patients were bombing  
Casualties, they were very dreadful,  
then the C.C.S.'s further advances  
were shelled & we had to take  
their patients - We evacuated very



Quickly. Then we got patients direct from the line as all the other C.P.S.'s had moved back.

I was on duty in one of the pavilions. It was used as a post-operative ward. There were 95 beds in it. The ward was well equipped. We had four dressing trolleys going all the time. We started with 2 sisters but soon increased the number to 6.

There were plenty of dressings & red cross corn poultices - & the food was good & plentiful.

The cases in this ward were chiefly penetrating Chests & Abdomens.

The chest response well to treatment - They were aspirated frequently - Very collapsed cases given given Sodi Bicarb. intravenously.

Glucose & Sodi. Bicarb. continuously was given per rectum for 48 hrs. after operation to all base cases.

The air raids were very trying. Fritz came over every night. Almost for 3 weeks. Dunters being so near we got the benefit of their visits there, also on their way to England.

Often bombs were dropped very close to us, once on the railway siding running into the yard & again just outside the wall where the 34 C.P.S. was camped. Killing some of their men.

Then came one evening when they visited us in earnest.

About 14 bombs were dropped in the



Camp. Fortunately none of our wards were hit, of course all the windows were smashed. One of our medical men, a Canadian was hit & his next man, several french orders were killed.

The Patients on the whole were very calm all the staff on duty remained in the wards, as all lights were out nothing could be done but stay by the patients.

The Ammunition, less shared by my friend & self was blown up a bomb having dropped in our compound. Fortunately we are both on duty & our suffered the loss of some clothes.

While at this P.C.S. we nearly always got 3 hrs of duty, sometimes 2 hrs. unless exceptional busy, of course then no one expected to go off. I say again my nearly 4 weeks there, the Matron & staff were very nice & worked together.

They closed down as the french were taking over their part of the line, & we were very sorry to leave.

The nursing staff had increased to about 24 - 7 of these were Australian Sisters.

After return to the Base we went on leave, spent a fortnight in Scotland & July & returned to France.

I was then sent to No 3 A.G.H.



Abbeville, only a few weeks there  
then to No 5 Station, Dieppe.

At No 5 we had chiefly local sick  
marines & West Indian boys. The dark  
boys suffered with pneumonia chiefly.

From Dieppe I had Paris leave  
was there when the Germans were  
shelling with "Big Bertie"

Just after the German offensive began  
ten of us were sent to No 1 A.C.H.  
in Rouen. They were very busy at  
this hospital, four with I was  
here & was very happy.

My duty was in a ward chiefly  
three joint arms & some fevers.

Then came orders to leave &  
go to No 3 A.C.H. Abbeville 10<sup>th</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> 18.

Had a strenuous time on night  
duty, convoys & evacuation  
every night.

After night duty went to  
medicine ward, pneumonia  
during the epidemic.

This seemed to be the saddest  
time of all, men who had  
been through the whole war &  
escaped shot & shell just died  
almost like flies. It made me  
weep many a time.

Later when we got slack we  
had the privilege of a trip  
over some of the battle fields.

My trip was through Amiens  
Villers Bretonneux, Corbe - Albert & Pozziers.  
It was all very interesting.

Christmas 1918 at Abbeville No 3 A.C.H.  
was made as happy as possible



for both patients & staff.

My leave was due in March 1919. It was too late to go to the Sea of France as the places there were booked to the time of closing, so I came to England.

Reported after leave & was sent to No 1 A. G. H. Sutton Vaux, 30.4.1919

This is my first duty in England.

Sutton Vaux is very pretty the hospital is almost in the centre of the woods, the trees & wild flowers are very pretty. There are charming walks when we are off duty, but of course we expect to go home to dear old Aussie before long.

Georgina Collins Sister  
No 1 Aus. Gen Hospital  
Sutton Vaux  
Wilt.