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AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES  
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SISTER G.M. DOHERTY.

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[966]

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."

MATRON Muriel Knox DOHERTY, R.R.C.  
A.A.N.S. & R.A.A.F. Nursing Service

Served as Sister in the A.A.N.S. & Matron & Principal Matron  
in the R.A.A.F. Nursing Service.

Collection of personal & official records concerning  
service & Services. Illus. with photographs.

Note: Matron Doherty's certificates of service and  
other private papers are included in the  
collection. Please note certain conditions  
govern personal diaries & one envelope of  
personal papers.

The collection is most comprehensive and has been  
catalogued under headings:

Armies: Australian: A.A.N.S.  
" " : A.A.M.W.S.  
Airforce: Aust.: RAAF Nursing Service  
" " " : Medical Air  
Evacuation Unit  
Biographical: Doherty, Matron Muriel Knox  
Books & Forms  
Dress: Aust.: A.A.N.S.  
" " : RAAF Nursing Service  
Pay  
Pictorial: Photographs  
Training: Aust.  
Voluntary Organizations: Aust.  
Women's Services: V.A.D.

V.M.B.  
22/9/1960

*Spare copies.*

EXPERIENCES IN A.A.N.S. OF MISS G.M. DOHERTY.  
.....

I sailed out of Fremantle on the S.S. "Moolton" conveying passengers and troops and sisters on May 24th 1915, and after calling in at Colombo Bombay Aden, we arrived at Port Suez on June 17th from where we disembarked and caught a train to Cairo the same day. Some of us were billeted at Ibrahim Palace and others at Gordon House Heliopolis, numbering in all thirty five sisters. Went on duty the following day at Luna Park, which was occupied as a convalescent Home. The place held over a thousand beds which strength was kept up. These beds were not ordinary hospital beds but made by the natives out of cane and were most unsuitable for the purpose, being most uncomfortable and hard. There was a room on each floor where the dressings were done of the patients who could walk. The wounds were slight and dressed with picric acid which did very well. If a patient became ill he was transferred to the Palace to receive proper attention which could not be given there, owing to lack of conveniences. I spent two months at Luna Park and was then transferred to the Palace Hospital. I commenced duties there in a large ward dealing with typhoid dysentery and spinal meningitis. From there I was sent to Abbasieh with four others to open an Auxiliary Hospital. The first patients received were wounded from the peninsula. Some time later it was turned into an infectious hospital. After spending about six months there I was sent back to the Palace Hospital and from there to the 3rd A.G.H. at Abbasieh.

I came across to France with No. 1 A.G.H. on board a Hospital Ship. We came up to Rouen from Marseilles by troop train which took two days to do the journey. Many of the hospitals in Rouen put us up for the night and the following day we were all attached to different hospitals for duty. I went with seven others to Le Havre where I spent three months in a hospital on the Quay in an acute ward on night duty all the time. The ward only held ten patients and I also had to attend to others on a balcony, but they were all very bad cases. It was called the "Bath" Ward as all the bad limbs were kept in baths for days. There were baths for all kinds of wounds and "Carters" beds to make the nursing easier as three of the patients had both legs off.

They could be lifted into the air while the beds were changed which was far less distressing than being turned.

After my three months there I was recalled to Rouen to my Unit where I remained until February 1917. We had very busy times at No. 1 and of course the work was very interesting to us.

In March 1917, I joined No. 3 Australian Casualty Clearing Station which took me four days to reach from Rouen. I spent one night at Abbeyville and the rest of the time in the trains. We changed trains several times and were held up on sidings frequently for hours at a time. All the trains were crowded with troops going up the line. I went by Ambulance from Amiens to Edgehill where the C.C.S. was stationed. There was some very heavy fighting going on in the line in front of us and crowds of wounded men came through the place during the following week. The hospital trains that carried the wounded away to the Base Hospitals used to draw into the siding just in front of us.

I was only there a couple of weeks when we got orders to advance the C.C.S. closer up to the line. Our Marquees were pulled down and taken up to Grevillers on the left of Bapaume on 8th April and we went up the day following in a couple of Ambulances along the Albert Bapaume Road which at that time had two large craters in it which the Germans had blown up when they retired. It was our first sight of the battlefields and we were all deeply impressed.

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It was very cold and snowing and all along the road we saw the boys in their dugouts sitting around small fires trying to keep themselves warm. The wounded were coming down as we were going up.

We went on duty straight away just as we were in our macintoshes and gum boots. There were no floors to the marquees owing to the shortage of duck boards which were urgently needed in the lines. The ground was soft and saturated and we were soon wading about in mud.

I was put in the theatre where operations ~~commenced~~ commenced before everything was unpacked. There were no beds mattresses or pillows etc. only stretchers and blankets so as soon as a patient was operated on and put back on the stretcher it gradually sank in the mud. There was no time to remove the men's clothes or boots. When we were just about full a hospital train came in and relieved the pressure. The stretcher bearers had a fearful time wading through the mud carrying the men to the carriages. There was another big battle on the 11th and 15th of the same month but by the 15th things had improved considerably and we were running much more smoothly; as the floors had been put down and we were more settled.

The next busy time we had was during the battle for Bullecourt between 3rd and 15th May 1917, and we had a fearful number of casualties through. We had over one hundred and thirty deaths. Two other C.C.S. then came up and we were relieved of much of the work. We were getting the men in at first just over an hour after they were wounded. There were four tables going day and night in the theatre. The patients were first brought into the admission tent where their wounds were examined and marked accordingly A.B.C. or D. All "As were urgent cases which were carried straight into the preparation tent where they were undressed and put in pyjamas if possible and from there they went to the theatre. All A cases were attended to first then the others in order. If the casualties were very heavy C & D cases were sent down in the trains without being operated upon.

In July we moved up North with our own troops while the C.C.S. was being erected we were stationed at Fravent in No. 6 Stationary Hospital We were sent for when C.C.S. was ready but only got as far as Abbeville when word came through that the place was being shelled and we were not to go up there so we were sent to No. 62 and 63 C.C.S.'s just outside Proven. Things quietened down in a few days so we returned to our own station. Our C.C.S. was advanced to Brandhoek but owing to the proximity of the troops causing heavy air raids, the sisters were sent back to less advanced C.C.S.'s. A week later the danger being past, the sisters returned. From then on we encountered very heavy and strenuous work caused by the terrible hard fighting in front of Ypres which necessitated a big increase in the nurses. We received American and English Surgical Teams and with our own kept eight tables going night and day in the theatre. The theatre was worked splendidly different tables attending to, all the same nature of wounds such as one table taking all chest cases another all limb cases etc. another abdominal wounds.

The C.C.S. was under shell fire here and several times shells landed in our camp. Two struck the Q.M.s store and others in the grounds. As the shelling continued and one sister was killed and another wounded in the C.C.S. opposite ours, orders were given for us to retire our station. The patients were hastily removed in Ambulances the staff following.

We were then sent to do nursing at St. Omer for a time. I with four

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others was sent to a C.C.S. at Remy Siding on Surgical teams. After being there some time I was sent back to St.Omer. A few weeks later I went to England on leave. On returning to Boulogne I received orders to rejoin my original Unit No.1 A.G.H. at Rouen where I was nursing until the transfer of the hospital to Sutton Veny England in December 1918.

(Signed) Gertrude M.Doherty.

I sailed out of Fremantle on the S.S. "Woolton" conveying passengers and troops and sisters on May 24th 1915, and after calling in at Columbo Bombay Aden, we arrived at Port Suez on June 17th from where we disembarked and caught a train to Cairo the same day. Some of us were billeted at Ibrahim Palace and others at Gordon House Heliopolis, numbering in all thirty five sisters. Went on duty the following day at Luna Park, which was occupied as a convalescent Home. The place held over a thousand beds which strength was kept up. These beds were not ordinary hospital beds but made by the natives out of cane and were most unsuitable for the purpose, being most uncomfortable and hard. There was a room on each floor where the dressings were done of the patients who could walk. The wounds were aseptically dressed with picric acid which did very well.

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In March 1917, I joined No.3 Australian Casualty Clearing Station which took me four days to reach from Rouen. I spent one night at Abbeyville and the rest of the time in the trains. We changed trains several times and were held up on sidings frequently for hours at a time. All the trains were crowded with troops going up the line. I went by Ambulance from Amiens to Edgehill where the C.C.S. was stationed. There was some very heavy fighting going on in the line in front of us and crowds of wounded men came through the place during the following week. The hospital trains that carried the wounded away to the Base Hospitals used to draw into the siding just in front of us.

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Australian War Memorial

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