

## WWI Army Nurses: The Gap Connection

Matron Eunice Paten M.B.E, A.R.R.C.

As the Centenary of the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli approaches, the enormous contribution of the Australian Army nurses to healing the wounded from the landing and the battles that followed are well remembered.



Sister Eunice Paten (1883-1973), born in The Gap to pioneer parents, completed her nursing training at the Brisbane Hospital in 1908 and joined the Australian Army Nursing Service at the outbreak of the war. With three other Queensland sisters she sailed from Pinkenba on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1914 for the Middle East as part of the Queensland contingent of the Australian Expeditionary Force.

At the time of the ANZAC landing she was stationed at the No 1 Australian General Hospital at Heliopolis in Egypt which received its first casualties four days later. Her letter home shortly afterwards captures the deep emotions felt by the sisters as they witnessed the return from battle of broken men from the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion they had come to know so well on the voyage over and learned of the loss of so many others:

It's a very sad and very proud lot we are this week. To our 9<sup>th</sup> has fallen the honour of the landing, the brave fighting ninth we cannot be too proud of them. --- we are really too broken hearted to write, but the pride of knowing we belong to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade keeps us going. ---.

The relief of seeing those we know come in is tremendous & we grieve deeply for the mothers who have lost their sons but they died game & Australia has gained her place with the Canadians. When we are allowed we will tell you what we can.

Sister Paten went on to nurse the wounded in England and France before returning to Brisbane in 1919. She did not marry but devoted the remainder of her long life to furthering the cause of nursing both in Queensland and nationally. She was immensely proud when in turn, as Principal Matron of the 1<sup>st</sup> Military District (Northern Command), she enlisted the first Queensland army nurses to go abroad in WWII.

Paten Park at The Gap is named in her honour.

Dick Paten  
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