

Sister E. Deane Williams,  
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I embarked in November, 1915 on the "Orsova". There were 100 sisters on board. The duty was very light owing to many sisters and little sickness. We reached Suez and entrained for Cairo, where I was detailed for duty at No.2 Australian General Hospital which had been a very large hotel. Here I worked under very good conditions. It had been established for some time, so therefore, was well equipped. I was very comfortably billeted in a part of the hotel.

I remained at No.2 A.G.H. until it closed preparatory to crossing to France, but I remained behind at No.3 A.A.H. the sporting club, Heliopolis. Here the conditions were not so good either for the patients or for the nursing staff. The patients that were boarded for Australia were concentrated here, some of them were still very ill. They were awaiting hospital ship to Australia.

The patients suffered much discomfort from the sand as we were right on the edge of the desert, the flies also being a great source of trouble.

I remained here until the hospital closed down, when I was transferred to Choubra Infectious Hospital. This had formerly been a semi-private Austria-Hungarian Hospital which had been commandeered at the outbreak of war, and which was therefore very well equipped and very comfortable.

It was situated in a large field. It had a large garden surrounding it where the convalescent patients practically lived, as being infectious they were not allowed out in Cairo the same as patients from the General Hospitals.

The dysentery patients from Mesopotamia were in a deplorable condition, very emaciated, and also those from the desert were in a very bad state. The percentage of recoveries was very good indeed. I was also in the Diphtheria ward where the percentage of recoveries was excellent too. The food was very good. We were catered for by a firm which cost just 2/6d per head per day. After this we drew rations and supplemented it by a small amount per day. The mess was then very much better.

It was an R.A.M.C. male personnel with an Australian nursing staff. In my opinion I do not think the combination of the two services is absolutely satisfactory.

We were billeted in a large house a short distance from the hospital and had our own servants. I was here seven months, when I was transferred to England, and after ten days which we spent in getting equipment, we crossed to France.

On reaching Boulogne I received orders to report at the 13th British Stationary Hospital. Here I was received by the matron and staff very kindly and had excellent work the severity of which varied according to the fighting. Our time off duty also varied according to the stress of work, but when possible we had three hours off every day.

Here we worked under excellent conditions, the hospital being a huttred one and extremely well equipped. We were billeted with French people who were very considerate for our welfare. There was very little amusement for the boys owing to the cases being so acute and evacuations being so frequent.

After ten months here I was transferred for duty to

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No.25 General Hospital which was a large hospital for skins with about 2400 beds. This also had an R.A.M.C. male personnel and an Australian nursing staff. 500 of these beds were set aside for clean operative work, medical cases. I was most of the time in the medical section. It was really a French villa, and was therefore rather difficult to manage as there were so many small rooms and narrow staircases and the heating arrangement was very poor. We were comfortably billeted in French Villas.

I was only here three months when I was transferred to the 53rd Casualty Clearing Station, and only remained here four or five days when we had to hurriedly evacuate owing to the Germans advancing. When we left this C.C.S. the enemy was only about 3½ miles away. They were shelling Roye so badly that it was with great difficulty that the patients were entrained, and a great many of the very severe cases had to be evacuated by ambulances. The stress of the moment was so great that the wounded had to take whatever available transport they could, many with penetrating chest wounds having to ride on a step of the ambulance. We got away from here by ambulance but had to leave our luggage behind. The whole of mine was lost in the retreat.

From Roye we went on to Hazecourt, where we just dressed the patients out in a field. There was no time to erect or establish our C.C.S. We had a few hours rest here in an empty chateau.

We left again very hurriedly, and had to get ready in twenty minutes as bridges were being blown down to try and stop the Germans advancing, and we had to cross to get away before this happened. We got all the patients on to a hospital train, and we came by ambulance to Neufchâtel. Here we found most of the very forward C.C.Ss. had taken refuge, and we all combined and did what we could for the wounded. We were nursing them in the open just one tent put up for a dressing tent and one for the most severe cases.

After 24 hours we were recalled to Abbeville. We stayed at the Nurses' Rest Home there for one night and then we reported at No.3 Australian General Hospital. They were also evacuating and I came on to Boulogne and was detailed for duty at No.2 Aust. General Hospital, where I remained until it disbanded in March 1919. This was a large well established, well equipped and most comfortable hospital. We were well billeted, had good work, and were all very happy.

After furlough I was detailed for duty at No.3 A.A.H. Dartford, where I now remain. Most of the patients here are awaiting transport to Australia.

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