

## Julia Mary Hart – Queensland First World War Nurse

Julia Mary Hart was one of the first four Queensland nursing sisters to enlist in the First World War Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) and embarked from Brisbane on 24 September 1914 with the 1<sup>st</sup> Light Horse Supply Train (9<sup>th</sup> Battalion) onboard the HMAT A5 *Omrah*<sup>1</sup>. This ship was one of 7 ships in the first Australian and New Zealand convoy, and was the one on which the first 25 Australian nurses were transported to the middle east, where the war had already begun<sup>2</sup>. Sister Hart served for the entirety of the war in Egypt, France, Italy and England, finally returning to Australia in April 1919. Her appointment with the AANS was finally terminated in June 1919<sup>3</sup>. She was mentioned in Sir Herbert CO Plumer's despatches in 1918 for 'gallant service and devotion to duty'<sup>4</sup>, and in 1919 she was awarded the Royal Red Cross (1<sup>st</sup> Class), by King George V, for her 'valuable service with the British Forces in Italy'.

Julia Mary Hart was born in Charters Towers, Queensland on 2 July 1885<sup>5</sup>, her parents being Patrick Joseph Hart and Mary Catherine O'Halloran. Patrick and Catherine had arrived into Townsville aboard the *Florence* as assisted immigrants, in June 1876<sup>6</sup>. Their first child Mary Catherine was born in 1878, followed by Mary in 1880, Bridget in 1883, Julia Mary in 1885 and a son, Patrick Francis in 1887<sup>7</sup>.

Julia Hart had completed her nursing training and was working as a nursing sister at Brisbane General Hospital in the lead-up to the declaration of war in 1914.

Sister Hart enlisted on 21 September 1914 in the AANS 1<sup>st</sup> Expeditionary Force as a Head Sister. The attesting officer was Major David Gifford Croll, Principal Military Officer (PMO) of the 1<sup>st</sup> Military District (Queensland). She then embarked, from Pinkenba, on the *Omrah* just 3 days later, on the 24<sup>th</sup> September<sup>8</sup>.

This first contingent of Queensland nurses and soldiers sailed first to Melbourne, arriving on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1914. They left Melbourne on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 1914, arriving in Albany, Western Australia, on 21<sup>st</sup> October. The whole of the first convoy left Albany on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1914. This accounts for the difference in dates in the records: even though the *Omrah* left Brisbane on 24<sup>th</sup> September, the official embarkation on the military service record was not until October, after they had set sail from Melbourne. Sister Hart's record lists 19 October 1914 as the date she embarked from Australia<sup>9</sup>. Some records list 1<sup>st</sup> November 1914 as the embarkation date – the date that the whole fleet left Albany.

The fleet sailed for Egypt via the Suez Canal, with Sister Hart disembarking in Alexandria on 25 April 1915, as part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian General Hospital (AGH)<sup>10</sup>. She was immediately attached to the 15<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital in Alexandria, and then lent by the Imperial Matron Chief to the

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<sup>1</sup> Discovering Anzacs NAA First Convoy Nurses – 1914 from Official Histories – Medical, First Convoy. <https://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/browse/person/193906>

<sup>2</sup> Discovering Anzacs NAA First Convoy Nurses – 1914 from Official Histories – Medical, First Convoy. <https://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/browse/person/193906>

<sup>3</sup> NAA: B2455, HART J M

<sup>4</sup> London Gazette: 30<sup>th</sup> May 1918 on page 6398 at position 1

<sup>5</sup> Queensland BDM, <https://www.qld.gov.au/law/births-deaths-marriages-and-divorces>

<sup>6</sup> Ancestry, Queensland State Archives; *Registers of Immigrant Ships' Arrivals*; Series: *Series ID 13086*; Roll: *M1697* accessed September 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Queensland BDM, <https://www.qld.gov.au/law/births-deaths-marriages-and-divorces>

<sup>8</sup> NAA: B2455, HART J M

<sup>9</sup> NAA: B2455, HART J M

<sup>10</sup> NAA: B2455, HART J M

Suez Government Hospital in Cairo. It is likely that she was sent there to care for soldiers from the Gallipoli campaign.

On return to duty with the 1<sup>st</sup> AGH in October 1915 she was attached as nursing staff on the HT *Wandilla* carrying troops back to Fremantle<sup>11</sup>. Whilst in Australia Sister Hart is quoted in the Evening Telegraph (Charters Towers, Queensland), saying that she “was never before in such a hot place as Cairo”.<sup>12</sup> The article says that she is “glad to have paid a visit home again”, but it is not clear if this is Charters Towers itself, or if the interview was relayed from Fremantle, and she just refers to Australia as “home”.

On return to London on 2 September 1916 Sister Hart reported to the Auxillary Hospital in Southall and was immediately attached to the 3rd AAH in Dartford, where she remained until March 1917, when she reported to AIF Headquarters in France. From here she was sent to the 1st Casualty Clearing Station at Estaires, France<sup>13</sup> and then was moved to the 1<sup>st</sup> AGH, Rouen, France, where many of the casualties from the Battle of the Somme were treated for trench foot and pneumonia, especially after the very harsh 1916-17 winter<sup>14</sup>.

In July 1917 Sister Hart was promoted to Head Sister and was attached to the No. 38 Stationary Hospital in Rouen, France<sup>15</sup>. This hospital was based in Rouen from July 1917 until November 1917 and then moved to Genoa, Italy where it remained until the armistice was declared<sup>16</sup>. Sister Hart was in Genoa from November 1917 until January 1919<sup>17</sup>, and in May 1918 she was mentioned in the despatches of General Sir Herbert C.O. Plumer GCB, GCMG, GCVO, ADC, “for distinguished and gallant services and devotion to duty”<sup>18</sup>. When the armistice was declared in November 1918 she was still based in Genoa. She recalled this experience in November 1932 saying: “being excitable people, the Italians rejoiced greatly at the news of Armistice” and “they proceeded to go up and down the streets” “blowing whistles and singing at the top of their voices”<sup>19</sup>. Sister Hart remained in Italy until January 1919 when she was awarded the Royal Red Cross, 1<sup>st</sup> Class for her ‘valuable service with the British Forces in Italy’<sup>20</sup>.

Soon after this she was transferred to England and reported to Army Headquarters, London. She was soon detached from hospital duty and returned to Australia on the HT *Nevassa*, arriving in Melbourne on 25 April 1919. On the 30 June 1919 she was officially discharged from the AIF<sup>21</sup>.

Sister Hart returned to Queensland and continued to serve as a nurse, taking up an appointment at the 17<sup>th</sup> AGH in Enoggera, Queensland by the end of 1919<sup>22</sup>. She worked as a nurse at the Kyoomba Repatriation Hospital in Stanthorpe, being Matron there in 1920<sup>23</sup>. In 1926 she was appointed Matron

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<sup>11</sup> NAA: B2455, HART J M

<sup>12</sup> SCORCHING EGYPT. (1916, January 25). *The Evening Telegraph (Charters Towers, Qld. : 1901 - 1921)*, p. 2. Retrieved September 9, 2019, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article212814219>

<sup>13</sup> NAA: B2455, HART J M

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.vlib.us/medical/CCS/ccs.htm>

<sup>15</sup> NAA: B2455, HART J M

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.vlib.us/medical/CCS/ccs.htm>

<sup>17</sup> NAA: B2455, HART J M

<sup>18</sup> London Gazette: 30<sup>th</sup> May 1918 on page 6398 at position 1

<sup>19</sup> MEMORIES OF ARMISTICE DAY (1932, November 11). *The Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld.: 1872 - 1947)*, p. 16 (CITY FINAL LAST MINUTE NEWS). Retrieved September 9, 2019, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article17953618>

<sup>20</sup> London Gazette: 23 May 1919 on page 891 at position 38.

<sup>21</sup> NAA: B2455, HART J M

<sup>22</sup> ALHA Website: <http://www.lighthouse.org.au>

<sup>23</sup> DIGGERS' CHRISTMAS. (1920, December 27). *The Daily Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1903 - 1926)*, p. 6. Retrieved September 9, 2019, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article212819623r>

of the Rosemount Repatriation Hospital in Brisbane<sup>24</sup>. She served in this position for 10 years, receiving the King's Silver Jubilee Medal in 1935<sup>25</sup>. She was appointed to the position of Matron at the Prince of Wales Repatriation Hospital in Randwick NSW in 1936<sup>26</sup>, and continued in this position until after the hospital became the Prince of Wales General Hospital in 1945. Sister Hart was still listed as a nurse on the NSW electoral rolls until she retired in 1949<sup>27</sup>. Julia Mary Hart died in Coogee, NSW in 1969<sup>28</sup>, aged 83, outliving her parents and all of her siblings<sup>29</sup>.

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Written by Carolyn Polson in 2019.

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<sup>24</sup> Woman's World (1926, July 22). *Townsville Daily Bulletin (Qld. : 1907 - 1954)*, p. 8. Retrieved September 9, 2019, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60923943>

<sup>25</sup> Of Interest To Women (1935, May 23). *The Queenslander (Brisbane, Qld: 1866 - 1939)*, p. 34. Retrieved September 9, 2019, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article27508339>

<sup>26</sup> The Australian Women's Weekly 7 Dec 1940, page 23.

<sup>27</sup> NSW Electoral rolls

<sup>28</sup> BDM NSW

<sup>29</sup> ALHA Website: <http://www.lighthouse.org.au>