



NURSING AFTER THE WAR

Some nurses connected to East Melbourne married on their return to Australia but most remained single. They had to support themselves for years, even decades, until they qualified for an invalid or age pension.

Many spent the rest of their working lives nursing sick and incapacitated troops in repatriation hospitals. Some turned to another new field, baby health and infant welfare. Others took up bush nursing, ran hospitals in Melbourne, country towns and small settlements, or became matrons in boarding schools. A few nursed overseas, perhaps following friendships made during the war.

Annie Purcell

Attended St Peter's Church Eastern Hill, East Melbourne

Enlisted in 1915 and served in Egypt, on the Western Front and in England; mentioned in despatches

Became prominent in the 'baby health movement' in the 1920s; ran several large centres and the Victorian Baby Health Centre's Training College

Provided extensive advice to new mothers on topics such as crying babies, feeding difficulties and nursery arrangements through her columns in newspapers and in radio talks

Died in Hobart in 1941, aged 54.



Her Excellency Lady Stonehaven yesterday afternoon made a tour of inspection of the suburban baby health centres. In the photograph taken at South Melbourne appear Sir George Cuscaden, Sister A. Purcell, and Lady Stonehaven. (Argus, 3.12.1926)

Katie Fegan

Born in East Melbourne; younger sister of Mother Xavier Fegan of the Sisters of Charity, Fitzroy

Enlisted in 1915 and served in Egypt, England and the Western Front

Nursed at 11 Australian General Hospital, Caulfield from 1920 until her retirement in 1939

Died in Melbourne in 1951, aged 72.



A ROUSING SEND-OFF for Sister C. A. Fegan, who retired yesterday after nearly 19 years' service at the Caulfield Military Hospital. Sister Fegan was presented with a travelling clock by the patients and staff. (Argus, 4.4.1939)

Sister Katie Fegan receives a presentation on her retirement from her patients at Caulfield Repatriation Hospital, (Argus, 4.4.1939)

Nesta (Ernestine) Edwards

Connected to East Melbourne by her father who lived at 67 Grey Street

Enlisted in 1917; served in British hospitals and an Australian casualty clearing station on the Western Front

Moved to South Africa after the war

Became matron of Kearsney College, a boys' school outside of Durban in the 1920s, then matron of Kearsney Hospital in the 1930s and 1940s

Returned to Australia aged 64, the Melbourne Argus noting that 'her many Melbourne friends will be delighted'

Died in Ivanhoe, Victoria in 1959, aged 76.



Sister Nesta Edwards at Kearsney College, near Durban, South Africa in 1923 (Kearsney College)

Annie Kidd Hart

Sister of Ethel Hart, matron of the Foundling Hospital, East Melbourne

Understated her age and enlisted in 1914, shortly after her brother Arthur

Served in Egypt, the Western Front and England

Described by her matron as 'remarkably good'; decorated with the Royal Red Cross (2nd Class) and mentioned in despatches

Matron of the Repatriation Hospital Randwick, NSW in the 1920s and 1930s

Died in Malvern, Victoria in 1937, aged 62.



Famous aviator Amy Johnson with Matron Annie Kidd Hart and patients at Rosemount Repatriation Hospital, Brisbane in 1930, (family collection)



HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PLANTS A TREE. At the Back, from Left to Right: Mr. J. E. Barrett, Matron Kidd-Hart, Mr. A. R. Knightley, Dr. E. A. Rutledge, and Mr. W. M. Hughes. (Sydney Mail, 28.11.1934)

Matron Annie Kidd Hart attending a tree planting ceremony by the Duke of Gloucester at Repatriation Hospital Randwick in 1934, (Sydney Mail, 28.11.1934)