

Stories from the Honour Boards

Stories of those who served and are remembered on the Honour Boards in the Merrington Anzac Memorial Peace Chapel at Saint Andrew's Uniting Church

Booklet Number 50

AMY JEAN BROCKWAY 1896 - 1981



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Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.

AIF - Australian Army Nursing Service badge



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Corner Ann and Creek Streets
Brisbane QLD 4000
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Amy Jean Brockway

Amy Jean Brockway was born on 17 March 1896, at Southport. She was the second daughter of Dr Archibald Birt Brockway and Ellen Maria (nee Dennis) Brockway. She had an older sister, Dorothy Mary who was born in 1890. Amy was fondly called by her family nickname “Biddy”.

Amy enlisted¹ as a 19 year old with the AIF on 16 December 1915 as a “Domestic” with Australian Nursing Service; her mother was listed as next of kin. The embarkation roll showed her rank as “Probationary Nurse/ Ward Assistant” as part of the Hospital Transport Corps. It can be seen on her enlistment papers that “Domestic” is underlined in red and a notation, also in red ink, is made of her not being a member of the Australian Army Nursing

Service and dated 5 September 1918. This situation, over which she had no control, ended with her being discharged from duty and left in Sydney on 8 April 1916 and her appointment terminated on 26 June 1918.

¹ Amy served with her father on the No. 2 Hospital Ship *Kanowna*. See Dr Brockway’s story in *Stories from the Honour Boards*, Booklet No 49

The No 2 Hospital Ship *Kanowna*, which Amy was to join in Sydney, had just been fully refitted as a hospital ship in England and sailed from there in September 1915 bringing back to Australia some 450 seriously wounded troops. It arrived in Sydney in December 1915 and it had been decided, as an experiment, to take onboard female domestic staff instead of male orderlies freeing up the men for fighting roles.

While the ship was docked at Garden Island for three weeks a controversy¹ broke out. The 14 domestic staff who had enlisted were given nurses uniforms and often referred to as “probationary nurses” and a misunderstanding with the ATNA (Australian Trained Nurses Association) ensued. They argued that there were many trained nurses waiting to fulfil roles in overseas service and that using untrained women was a danger to sick and wounded men. Regardless of the controversy, Amy and the other 13 female domestic staff/ ward assistants departed from Sydney on the No. 2 Army Hospital Ship, HMAS *Kanowna* on 22 December 1915.



¹ From *A ship's life; the KANOWNA Story – SS; HMAR A61; D14; No. 2 Australian Hospital Ship*. National Archives of Australia, Discovering Anzacs.

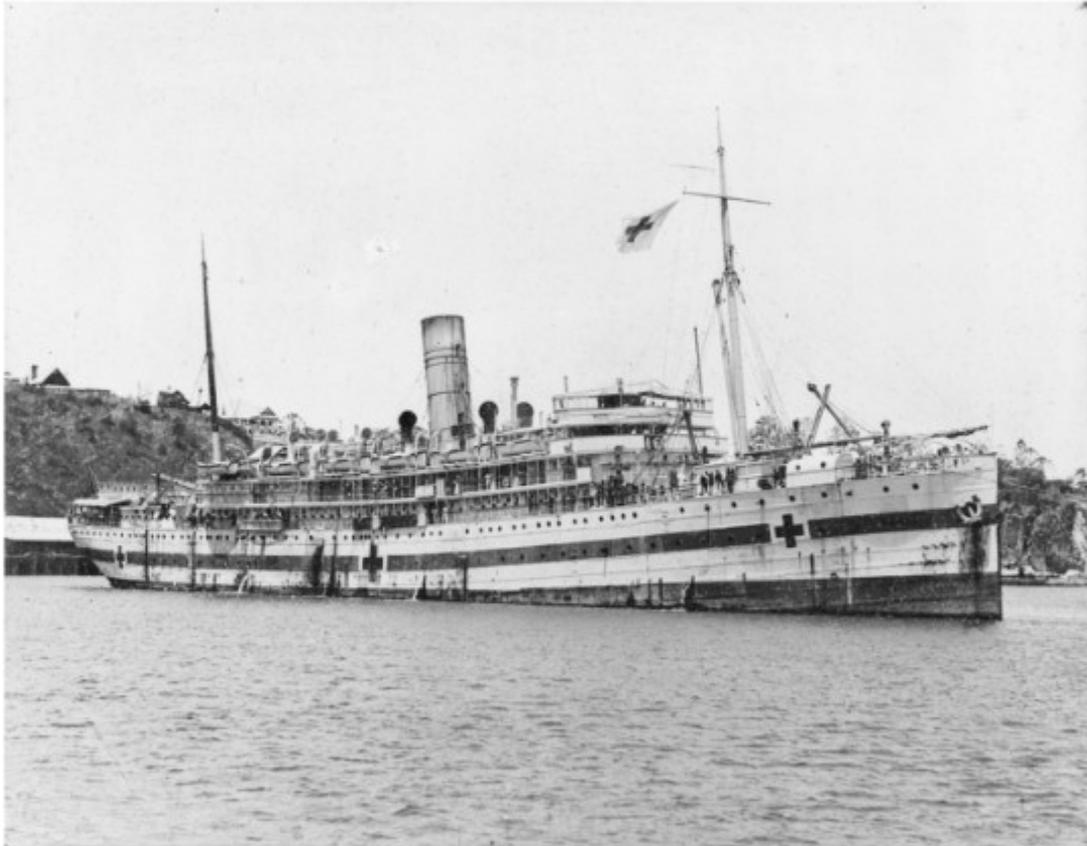
During the voyage from Australia to Egypt and back again, these women quite capably carried out duties that had little to do with nursing. Although a few did have some nursing training, most had come from previous occupations as “domestics” and their skills were utilised in similar “housework” on board the ship.



*Nursing staff of the hospital ship
Kanowna outside the vessel's
smoking room*

Unfortunately, the pressure from the ATNA prevailed, and after disembarkation in Sydney in April 1916, all 14 women were discharged and left there. Many of the troops on this journey were convalescent patients compared to the previous trip and there were no deaths. The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Birt Brockway (Amy's father), the medical staff and Matron Strickland highly praised the women who were discharged, to the extent that the matron supplied each with a letter of appreciation for their work. Perhaps Dr Brockway could be forgiven for not standing up to the pressure from the ATNA, when it's considered that his daughter Amy was one of those discharged, and he may have faced an accusation of nepotism.

H.S KANOWNA



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Amy returned to Brisbane, and on 14 October 1920, married Ormande (Ormond) Presley Hill at All Saints Church, Wickham Terrace. The Rev A Maxwell of Gympie conducted the service. Ormond was the eldest son of Mr and Mrs EOW Hill of Fassifern and his occupation was listed as a grazier. He served in Egypt in WW1 in the 4th Camel Regiment of the AIF as a Lance Corporal. He suffered a gunshot wound to the chest on 3 April 1918 and was admitted to the Australian General Hospital in Egypt on 10 April. Ormond returned to duty and was demobilised on 11 March 1919.

16 Courier (Qld. : 1864 - 1933) (about)

◀ Saturday 23 October 1920 ▶

HILL—BROCKWAY.—On October 14th, at All Saints' Church, Wickham-terrace, by the Rev. A. Maxwell, Gympie, Ormande Presley, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. E. O. W. Hill, Fassifern, to Biddy, younger daughter of Dr. and Mrs. A. B. Brockway, Wickham-terrace, Brisbane.



Despite the previous controversy regarding her service in the AIF, on 27 August 1923, Amy received the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Allied Victory Medal for her service as a Nurse on the 2nd Army Hospital Ship.

After her marriage, Amy lived in Fassifern, Kalbar, Queensland but later moved to Brisbane and was recorded as living at 15 Houthem Street, Camp Hill with her husband, Ormond, until 1958. Ormond died in 1961 and Amy passed away in Brisbane in 1981

Select Bibliography

Australian War Memorial

National Archives of Australia – Discovering Anzacs

Trove – Digitised newspapers – The Brisbane Courier and
The Queenslander

Ancestry.com

Compiled by Miriam King, April 2015.



Lest we forget