

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 100

WINIFRED SAGAR

1878 - 1948



This booklet remains the property of Saint Andrew's Uniting Church.
Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.

©Saint Andrew's Uniting Church
Corner Ann and Creek Streets
Brisbane QLD 4000
2016

Sister Winifred Sagar

Winifred Sagar was born in Ipswich on 5 December 1878, the daughter of Alfred and Susannah (nee Fox) Sagar. Alfred, who was born in Bury in Lancashire in 1830, was an engineering draftsman with the Railway Department, probably at the Railway Workshops. Susannah had arrived in Queensland at the age of 6 years in 1852 and married Alfred on 15 November 1869. They had six other children, William Henry (born 25 August 1870), Percival Alfred (born 18 December, 1871), Florence Emma (born 17 July 1873), Clarissa Jane (born 23 September, 1874) Amy Elizabeth (born 28 June 1876), Alfred Horace (born 13 April 1884). Nothing more is known of Percival, but two children died in infancy, Florence in 1873 and Clarissa in 1879.

Alfred, who was 16 years older than Susannah, probably died in 1902 or 1903, based on the date of his Will, although no record can be found of his death in the Queensland Register of Deaths. Susannah was known as an indefatigable worker for philanthropic institutions in Brisbane, such as the Industrial Home for Girls at Normanby, the Fortitude Valley Benevolent Society, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. She was a member of the Wharf Street Congregational Church and Winifred is remembered on the honour board of that congregation.

Winifred trained as a nurse, and in 1903 was in residence at the Children's Hospital, and then in 1908 was at the Victoria Hospital in Stanley Street. Susannah and Amy were living in Martin Street, Fortitude Valley. By 1913 the family had moved to Station Street, Albion, and Winifred was living there with Susannah, Amy and Alfred Junior, who had qualified as a dentist. Alfred married in 1915 and moved to Hendra with his wife, Elizabeth.

Winifred enlisted in the Australian Army Nursing Service on 26 August, 1915, listing her brother William as next-of-kin. William was manager of the New Zealand Insurance Company in Brisbane at that time, but had previously worked for the company in South Africa. He later took up the position of manager for the company in Sydney. Winifred was 5 ft 2 inches (158 cm) tall, weighed 9 st 1 lb (62 kg) and described as having a dark complexion with brown hair and brown eyes. Her religious denomination was given as Congregationalist.

Winifred embarked from Sydney for overseas service on the His Majesty's Australian Transport (*HMAT*) *Themistocles* on 29 December 1916, arriving in Plymouth on 3 March, 1917 and spent the next two years in France, where she served mostly in General Hospitals, but spent time in the other parts of the casualty evacuation chain, Stationary Hospitals and Casualty Clearing Stations.

The Casualty Clearing Stations (CCS) could treat a minimum of 200 sick and wounded at any one time and held at least 50 beds and 150 stretchers. They were designed to facilitate movement of casualties from the battlefield to the hospitals, or—if wounds were light—back to the front. Stationary and General Hospitals were further back from the front line. The title 'Stationary Hospital' was a misnomer as these units could actually move more easily than the CCS. Each one was designed to hold up to 400 casualties, but they tended to be used as specialist hospitals, e.g. VD; gas victims, neurasthenia cases (shell shock), general illness and epidemics.

In France and Flanders, General Hospitals were located on or near railway lines to facilitate movement of casualties from the CCS.

They were generally near the coast because they needed to be near a port so that men could be evacuated for longer-term treatment in the UK. They were large facilities, often centred on big pre-war buildings such as grand hotels, casinos and seaside resorts but others consisted of huts constructed on open ground. In the Base Areas such as Étapes, Boulogne, Rouen, Havre, and Plage, General Hospitals had all the departments and paraphernalia of civilian hospitals. The holding capacity was such that a patient could remain until either fit to be returned to his unit, sent via hospital ships across the Channel to the UK for specialist treatment, or be discharged from the forces.

On her arrival in France, Winifred was posted to the No 12 Stationary Hospital in Rouen taking up duty on 13 March. However, at the beginning of June, the War Office decided that nursing staff in various Imperial units (e.g. Australians and New Zealanders) were to be grouped together in three British units, working under Matrons from their own service. One of these units was No.25 General Hospital at Hardelot-Plage.



25 British General Hospital, Hardelot c1918

The hospital required a staff of 100 under the command of Matron A M Kellett, who took over on 10 July. The hospital was thereafter staffed by Australian nurses (33 Sisters and 66 Staff Nurses) and English medical officers. Coinciding with this administrative change, Winifred was posted to No.25 General Hospital on 18 July, and she was to serve there for much of her time in France.

The hospital was principally for skin cases - 2400 beds - with about another 500 available for operations and medical cases. All the 'clean' surgery for the Boulogne area was also done there. The dressing of some of the skin cases took a considerable time to do and required a great amount of patience. The major portion of the hospital was under canvas, but the administrative offices, main theatre, acute surgical wards, and dispensary were in what had been the Hôtel de Hardelot in pre-War days. Acute medical cases and sick officers were in annexes of the hotel.



Hôtel de Hardelot

The sisters were billeted in six comfortably furnished villas, the only drawback being that they were scattered in different parts of Hardelot, and because there was only one central mess room, this was a great disadvantage in wet weather or when it was snowing. The forest was a great source of pleasure to the nursing staff, as it supplied the flowers to beautify their wards.

On 2 January 1918, Winifred was admitted to the hospital with bronchitis. She was discharged on 20 January, but granted 3 weeks sick leave which she spent in England. She returned to duty on 10 February and she served at No 25 General Hospital until 12 August, when she transferred to the No 47 Casualty Clearing Station on the Somme.

On 3 October, she became a victim of the influenza pandemic, and was admitted to the No 2 British Stationary Hospital in Abbeville. She was on her way to the UK to convalesce on 11 October, but was too ill to complete the trip and was detained at No 14 General Hospital in Wimereux with diphtheria. She was able to be transferred to England on 21 October and was admitted to a convalescence unit at Southwell Gardens in South Kensington. She was well enough to return to France for duty at No 25 General Hospital on 15 November, but fell ill with laryngitis and was again admitted to the No 14 General Hospital on 23 November and then sent to convalesce from post-influenza debility at Cannes, Boulogne on 11 December.

She reported again for duty No 25 General Hospital on 31 December 1918 after having been promoted to the rank of Sister.

She remained there until the hospital closed for admissions on 8 February 1919, in preparation for a move to Cologne, to care for the British Forces holding the Rhine, and where it was to be operated without the nursing staff. Orders were therefore received on 20 February for all AANS nursing staff to proceed to England in parties of 10, the first leaving on 26 February. Winifred returned to England on 6 March and Matron Kellett left with the last party on 10 March.

Winifred returned to Australia on the *Wandilla*, departing from Southampton on 26 March and disembarking in Brisbane on 18 May. She was discharged on 2 July, 1919.



Winifred (left) and Amy Sagar (right)

It is not known if Winifred returned to nursing in civilian life after her return from the war.

Susannah and Amy were still at Station Street, Albion, but although this remained Winifred's address on the electoral roll, the membership roll of the Wharf Street Congregational Church does not record her at this address until 1927 (after Susannah's death in 1926). Winifred never married, and she and Amy lived together at Station Street until 1937 when they moved to 25 Upper Lancaster Road, Albion Heights. Winifred and Amy were regular attendees at the City Congregational Church (as the Wharf Street Church became known), and the 1939 Year Book noted that Winifred was present at every communion service through the year.

Winifred died on 11 September, 1948. The church's Women's Union report for 1949 recorded her death and commented that she "showed a fine spirit of Christian patience through her long illness". It was also reported that her sister Amy was unwell. Winifred's funeral was conducted at the City Congregational Church, Wickham Terrace, and her ashes were interred at the Mount Thompson Memorial Gardens. Amy died in 1951.

References

- AANS - Hospitals units. <https://sites.google.com/site/archoevidence/home/ww1australianwomen/aans/aans---hospitals-units#TOC-No.25-General-Hospital> Accessed by Ian Withnall 29 December 2015
- Ancestry.com. *Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Accessed by Ian Withnall 29 December 2015
- Ancestry.com. *Lancashire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1911* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Accessed by Ian Withnall 29 December 2015
- Ancestry.com. *Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Accessed by Ian Withnall 29 December 2015
- Ancestry.com. *Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903-1980* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010. Original data: Australian Electoral Commission. Accessed by Ian Withnall 29 December 2015
- Electoral roll 1903 Fortitude Valley, Brisbane Division
 - Electoral roll 1908 South Brisbane, Division of Oxley
 - Electoral roll 1913 Toombul, Division of Lilley
 - Electoral roll 1925 Toombul, Division of Lilley
 - Electoral roll 1937 Toombul, Division of Lilley
 - Electoral roll 1943 Toombul, Division of Lilley
- Funeral Notices, The Courier Mail Brisbane Queensland Monday 13 September 1948 page 6. <http://nurses.ww1anzac.com/sa.html>. Accessed by Ian Withnall 29 December 2015
- Jones, F., 2013. *Australian Nurses in World War 1* (Sagar, Winifred). <http://nurses.ww1anzac.com/sa.htm> Accessed by Ian Withnall 29 December 2015
- Mrs. Susannah Sagar. Brisbane Courier Thursday 16 September 1926 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/21059714>. Accessed by Ian Withnall 29 December 2015
- National Archives of Australia, SAGAR Winifred : Staff Nurse, First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1914-1920. <http://naa12.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=8074558> Accessed by Ian Withnall 29 December 2015.
- Notes on the Australian Army Nursing Service in the Great War*. Hardelet-Plage <http://throughtheselines.com.au/research/hardelet-plage>. Accessed by Ian Withnall 29 December 2015
- Queensland State Archives. Alfred Sagar: Queensland, Australia, Will Index, 1857-1900 (all Districts), 1901-1940 (Southern District) <http://www.archives.qld.gov.au/Researchers/CollectionsDownloads/Documents/WillsS-Z.pdf>. Accessed by Ian Withnall 5 April 2016
- Royal Army Medical Corps, 2007 *The RAMC Chain of Evacuation The Great War 1914-1918* http://www.ramc-ww1.com/chain_of_evacuation.php Accessed by Ian Withnall 29 December 2015
- The City Congregational Church, Brisbane, 1949. Year Book for the year ended 30 June, 1949.

Compiled by Ian Withnall. Brisbane. April 2016



Lest we forget