

A WORLD WAR I MEMORY

ELISABETH MATTIE CHISHOLM

With the recent Armistice celebrations and the new eBook that Robert Chisholm has just released, I thought it might be good to celebrate a Chisholm woman who served in WWI. This brought me to look in our Chisholm Book to see who I could find and of course I remembered Elisabeth Mattie Chisholm. The very brief story that was supplied to me by Margaret Djordevic about 30 years ago is reprinted below. I have tried developing her profile a little.

'ARTHUR BOWMAN AND MARGARET JOHNSTONE (KEYS) CHISHOLM'S ELDEST DAUGHTER

ELIZABETH (MATTIE) was born on 9 April 1879. She trained as a nursing sister at Sydney Hospital and served in Army hospitals in France and London with the AIF in World War I, sailing in the first hospital ship in 1914. Mattie was decorated for her war service and her uniform was worn by the model who posed for the nurse on the Sydney Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park.

After the war she travelled extensively and finally settled down in Beecroft where she lived until her death on 14 September 1958. Mattie never married. She took a keen interest in the Society for Crippled Children and always kept in touch with other ex-army nurses.'

Elisabeth called herself Mattie, so I shall follow her lead.

She was born into the extensive Goulburn Chisholm family in 1879. Her father, Arthur Bowman Chisholm was the seventh son of James and Elisabeth Chisholm of Kippilaw, Goulburn. Arthur's first marriage was to Fanny Jane Deloitte in 1872. They had one daughter, also called Fanny Jane, in 1873 and sadly the mother died ten days after giving birth.

Arthur's second marriage was to Margaret Johnstone Keys in 1877. This marriage produced eight children; a son, who died shortly after birth; and then seven daughters. Mattie was the eldest, born in 1879 and baptized Elisabeth Margaret.

The girls grew up at Carrawarra, Goulburn, a lovely old home, still standing in Cowper Street. The property that Arthur ran within the Chisholm Brothers network was 'Lerida', on the way to Canberra, not far from Gunning. As it was too remote for education etc., the family lived in Goulburn. The girls were educated in Goulburn and learnt the gentle arts for girls at that time; china painting, needlework, spinning, knitting; and in the youngest girl's case, wood carving. The mantelpiece in Carrawarra is still looking elegant with Joan's carving.



Carrawarra, Goulburn

I also believe the young Fanny Jane, their step-sister, was an active member of this feminine family because Mattie kept a strong connection to her elder sister. In 1914 Fanny, now married to Arthur Sendall and living in Goulburn, was named as next of kin on Mattie's enlistment form.

Mattie trained as a nurse at Sydney Hospital. When war broke out in 1914 she had already been part of the Australian Auxiliary Nursing Service, joining in 1910 (when she was 29), as her war records show. She joined the AIF (Australian Imperial Force) in August 1914.

1020-15-4

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

Australian Imperial Force.

Attestation Paper of Persons enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. S/W Name Chisholm, Elizabeth, Mattie.
 Unit A.A.N.S. A.I.F.
 Joined on 1910. } August 1914.

Questions to be put to the Person enlisting before attestation.

1. What is your name?	1. <u>Elizabeth Mattie Chisholm</u>
2. In or near what Parish or Town were you born?	2. In the Parish of <u>North Sydney</u> is of near the Town of <u>Sydney</u> in the County of <u>Cumberland, Sydney</u>
3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? (O.R.—If the latter, papers to be shown.)	3. <u>Natural born Brit: sub. N.S.W.</u>
4. What is your age?	4. <u>35. at date of enlistment 1914</u>
5. What is your trade or calling?	5. <u>Nurse.</u>
6. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period?	6. <u>No.</u>
7. Are you married?	7. <u>No.</u>
8. Who is your next-of-kin? (Address to be stated)	8. <u>Sister:—M.A.S. Sendall, Personal Goulburn.</u>
9. Have you ever been enlisted by the Civil Power?	9. <u>No.</u>
10. Have you ever been discharged from any part of His Majesty's Forces, with ignominy, or as Incapable and Wasteful, or on account of Corruption of Money, or of a Suspension of Penal Servitude, or have you been dismissed with Disgrace from the Navy?	10. <u>No.</u>
11. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the R.F.M., the British Empire, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state name of discharge.	11. <u>As Efficient in A.A.N.S. Unit 4 yrs. on Reserve 100 years previous to 1914.</u>
12. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service?	12. <u>Yes.</u>
13. Have you ever been reported as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds?	13. <u>No.</u>
14. (For married men, widowers with children, and soldiers who are the sole support of widowed mothers)— Do you understand that no Repatriation Allowance will be issued to you after embarkation during your term of service?	14. _____

I, Elizabeth Mattie Chisholm do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above Questions are true, and I am willing and lawfully voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the Limits of the Commonwealth.

And I further agree to be liable to be called upon to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia at any time during my period of enlistment.

Date 5. 2. 16. E.M. Chisholm.
 Signature of Person enlisted.

* This clause should be struck out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 18 years of age.
 † Two-fifths must be allotted to the wife, and if there are children three-fifths must be allotted.

Mattie embarked in November 1914, on the "Kyarra" arriving in Egypt in early March, 1915. She went first to the No.1 Australian General Hospital and shortly after to No.2 where she nursed for the remainder of her time in Egypt through 1915 and part of 1916.

Chis Maxwell provided me with some information from letters and records of Alice Chisholm (later Dame Alice; second wife of William Chisholm of Merilla, who had died in 1902). During WWI Alice

ran hospital services and canteens for the Australian troops in Egypt and Palestine. She had gone to Egypt when her youngest son Bertram had enlisted. Her daughter Dorothy soon followed, as did many of the Goulburn Chisholm women, including Sheila Chisholm of Wollongorang and Alice Stanger-Leathes (Chisholm) formerly of Merilla. Mattie would have had continual contact with her cousins and her aunt Alice.

The main hospital was called Luna Park. This had originally been a large amusement park, built as a playground for millionaires and now converted into a hospital known as 1st Australian General Hospital (AGH). Mattie was initially posted to this hospital but shortly transferred to the 2nd AGH situated in the Ghezireh Palace Hospital, still standing and now part of a large hotel. A letter sent by Alice's son Bertram in late 1915 tells of Alice "hopping" round all the hospitals in Cairo, organizing her girls and that the "Carrawarra damsels" were "on the road".



This photo, taken at the Luna Park Hospital, shows Alice and Dorothy Chisholm along with members of the nursing staff. Mattie would have been an active member of a team such as this.

In 1916 she joined the BEF (British Expeditionary Force) in Alexandria and proceeded to Marseilles, France. She nursed in hospitals in this area for at least a year, transferring to England in 1917, where she nursed with the AIF in hospitals in the UK for the remainder of the war. She returned to Australia on "The City of Exeter" as part of the nursing staff in January 1919. She was discharged in May 1919.



Mattie (on the right) with nursing associates (from Miriam Chisholm archives, courtesy Tony Morrison)

Continuing her association with nursing and war service, Mattie provided the uniform for the statue of a young nurse on the Anzac memorial in Hyde Park, Sydney, sculpted by Raynor Hoff in 1929. The remainder of her life is not known in detail. The story in the book is sketchy. Apparently she lived in Beecroft, Sydney for many years, travelling and supporting the Crippled Children Society while maintaining contact with her nursing associates.

Carolyn Chown
November, 2018