

Sister Janet Ella Radcliff

"War work is a nurse's duty"



Sister Janet Radcliff

Janet Ella Radcliff was born in Hobart on 5 April 1883 and was the fourth of Mary and Sir Hamilton Radcliff's six children. Janet's father, Sir Hamilton, was manager of the Hobart Savings Bank and the family lived at Risdon Road in New Town. After the sudden, early death of Sir Hamilton the family moved to 251 Davey Street, Hobart, which today is a historic house called the Hermitage.



"The Hermitage" 251 Davey Street, Hobart

Janet was educated at the Girls' High School Hobart and her public examination results were reported in The Mercury Newspaper in 1900 and 1901. Janet matriculated to the University of Tasmania in 1905 and she and her sister Helen Cicley (Cecily) Radcliff are the only two woman known to be on the University of Tasmania Honour Board which lists the surnames and initials of students, staff and graduates who served in the First World War. According to the university, neither Janet or her sister are listed as graduates.



University of Tasmania WW1 Honour Board

Janet was 25 when her father collapsed and died in early 1909. Later in the year Janet started nursing at the Hobart General Hospital. After becoming a qualified nurse Janet worked in Hobart as a nursing sister. In August 1914 it was reported in the newspaper that Janet was taking up a position as matron in a Sydney hospital, but she changed her mind and enlisted in the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) on 11 August 1914, a week after war was declared.

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AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

Australian Imperial Force.

Attestation Paper of Persons enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. _____ Name Radcliff Janet
 Unit A. A. N. S.
 Joined on Sept. 26th 1914.

Questions to be put to the Person enlisting before attestation.

1. What is your name?	1. <u>Janet Radcliff</u>
2. In or near what Parish or Town were you born?	2. In the Parish of _____ in of _____ near the Town of <u>Hobart</u> in the County of <u>Tasmania</u>
3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown.)	3. <u>Natural Born British Subject</u>
4. What is your age?	4. <u>31 ⁶/₁₂</u>
5. What is your trade or calling?	5. <u>Trained nurse</u>
6. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period?	6. <u>Hobart General Hospital</u>
7. Are you married?	7. _____
8. Who is your next-of-kin? (Address to be stated).	8. <u>Mother. 27th Radcliff 251 Danny Street Hobart Tasmania</u>
9. Have you ever been convicted 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 Incontinent and Worthless, or on account of Conviction of Felony, or of a Sentence 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 Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge.	11. <u>Army Nursing Service since Aug. 1914</u>
12. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service?	12. <u>Yes</u>
13. Have you ever been rejected 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 mother)— Do you understand that no Separation Allowance will be issued to you after embarkation during your term of service?	14. _____

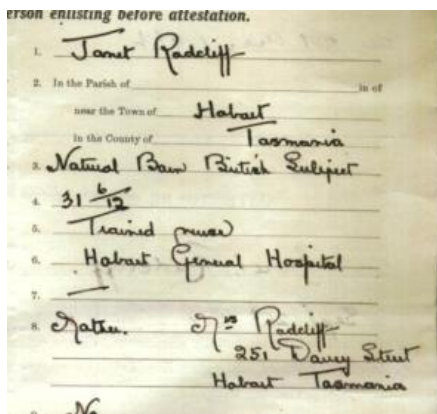
I, Janet Radcliff of Hobart, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

Date 20th May 1916 Janet Radcliff
 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.

Janet Radcliff's Attestation Paper

Much of the following information comes from two records about Colonel Charles Hazell Elliott and Family which are held in the Tasmanian Archives. Charles' wife was Janet's friend, Alice Gordon King. Janet and Alice left Hobart together in October 1914 and served together throughout the war until Alice was forced to resign when she married Colonel Elliot in December 1917. One of the records held in the archives has over 30 pages of rough handwritten drafts about Alice and Janet's memories of their war service. Janet is named as likely being one of the writers. Janet's writing was very distinctive and the writing on some of the pages matches her handwriting style.



Attestation paper with Janet's handwriting

of transports at Sewla Bay & across the low lying land we could see the Tommies making ~~for the~~ ~~main ground~~ their way. We crossed to Imbeos & transferred some hundreds of patients to a large transport that was waiting there then returned to Orgeat & took on 60 more badly wounded & sailed for Alexandria. Arriving there we found and

Sample from records in Tasmanian Archives that matches Janet's writing style

Hobart - September 1914

"We expected to embark on 26 September 1914, and so hurried preparation had to be made re uniform and outfit. We also expected our destination to be England or France, certainly not Egypt, and so made preparations accordingly."

"The only supply of uniform we had in Peace time was the grey serge dress, red cape and army bonnet with badges etc. These we could purchase with an order from a tailor in our own capital who possessed the sealed patterns. When it came to getting together the indoor uniform, coats etc we had to wire Lincoln Stuarts of Melbourne. 15-pound outfit money was allowed us, the firm of tailors charged two pounds for a grey zepher dress, just the ordinary grey washing working uniform. Needless to say, our 15-pound outfit money did not go as far as it might have done."

Hobart - Egypt October 1914 - December 1914

Janet and Alice sailed on the HMAT Geelong from Hobart on 20 October 1914. They were the first two nurses to leave Tasmania for the war and were in the group 25 nurses who sailed with the first convoy of seven AIF ships. Janet's work started immediately. The Geelong had 3 wards with a total of 33 bunk beds and an average of 12 patients a day. In addition to providing nursing care for the soldiers and crew the two nurses were expected to train the orderlies and ambulance staff.



HMAT Geelong leaving Hobart 20 October 1914



Sister Alice Gordon King and Sister Janet Radcliff on the Geelong

Cairo, Egypt December 1914 - March 1915

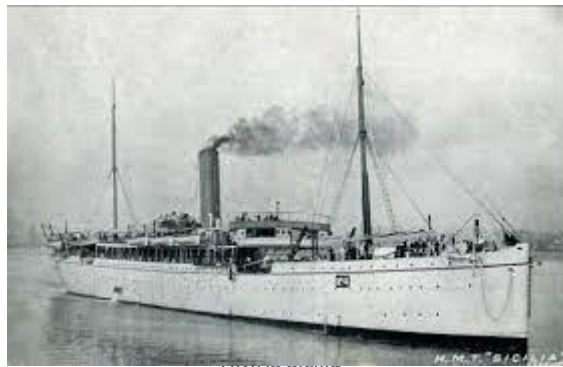
Janet and Alice arrived Alexandria in December 1914 and were part of the 2nd Australian General Hospital (2AGH). They were sent to Cairo to help turn the Mena House Hotel, which the notes say was "situated almost under the Pyramids" into a hospital. In late January 1915 they were sent to Ismailia near the Suez Canal to turn a large house into a hospital because the Turkish forces were expected to attack.

"On the morning of Tuesday 2 February 1915, the Turks attacked the canal...the attack at Lake Twizel was about four miles away from our hospital but shells fell into the lake and in Ismailia itself; at first, we could only hear the guns in the distance, but they sounded very close later on that day...our first experience with the wounded & the sound of guns, so it was quite a gentle breaking in before the distressful days of Gallipoli"

From Ismailia they went to the hospital at Abbassia as the New Zealand nurses who were to run it had not arrived.

Hospital Ship HMHS Sicilia, Mediterranean Expeditionary Force April 1915 - August 1915

In early April 1915 they were "Lent with several others to the Imperial Govt" to nurse on the HMHS Sicilia transferring wounded soldiers from the Casualty Clearing Stations (CCS) at Gallipoli to CCS's in Malta and Alexandria.



"Our ship was at Cape Hellas,(sic) for the landing at Gallipoli where the British 29th Division attacked."

"Our staff was ridiculously inadequate, we just tried to do the most essential things, and it was hard at times to judge which things could or could not be left. In remembering that first trip to Gallipoli it seems like one long moan of agony, 500 badly wounded men, with a staff of five medical officers, eight trained women, and 12 orderlies, which anyone can see was a hopelessly inadequate staff to cope with such numbers of severely wounded men, needless to say we could hardly bear to leave our wards even for the three hours our matron insisted on in each 24. Among the hardships for the wounded was the constant vibration of our ship caused by the large guns of the warships surrounding us."

"It is a desperate feeling to admit patients and help the doctors fight hard for their lives and yet see all efforts unavailing, it was very necessary to always keep clearly in our minds that we were fighting for right and justice otherwise it seemed such a wicked waste of young strong manhood."

"In August we had another very strenuous time, awaiting at ANZAC on the 6th at about 2 pm we began to admit patients at once and from 2 pm until 2 am we continued to admit, then there was necessarily a lull as every available space seemed to accommodate a wounded man we had 1009 on the ship which could only take 400 bed cases and 100 on mattresses on the deck, yet here we were with around 1000, men were lying on blankets along all the corridors and in the holds, there was no going to bed for any of the staff that night."

Mentioned in Despatches

Janet and Alice were mentioned in despatches in the London Gazette on the 21 June 1916. Today people claim that this was for "her hospital work under dangerous conditions at Abbeville", but Janet was not in France until 1917. Her friend Alice Gordon King's Department of Veterans' Affairs file has a note that is more likely to be right. "NB sister Radcliff and I served together throughout our Active Service until my marriage in December 1917. She too was Mentioned in Dispatches for Gallipoli."

6184 SUPPLEMENT TO THE LONDON GAZETTE, 21 JUNE, 1916.

No. 13 Staff Serjt. T. A. Fraser, Aust. Imp. Force.
 No. 16 Staff Serjt. J. S. Conroy, Aust. Imp. Force.

Australian Troops.
 1st Light Horse Regiment.
 No. 705 Serjt. L. G. Andrews.
 3rd Battalion (New South Wales).
 Qrmr. and Hon. Maj. G. Wall.
 4th Battalion (New South Wales).
 No. 1307 Staff Serjt. S. Forbes.
 5th Battalion (Victoria).
 No. 182 Serjt. H. F. Coleman.
 11th Battalion (Western Australia).
 Capt. A. M. Phillips.

Army Service Corps.
 Maj. and Hon. Lt.-Col. J. G. Tedder.

Army Medical Corps.
 Col. (Hon. Surg.-Gen.) W. D. C. Williams, C.B.
 Lt.-Col. (temp. Col.) H. C. Maudsley.
 Lt.-Col. B. J. Newmarch, V.D.
 Lt.-Col. J. B. McLean.
 Capt. (temp. Maj.) T. F. Brown.
 Capt. (temp. Maj.) D. S. Mackenzie.
 No. 1008 Qrmr.-Serjt. J. S. A. Dowling.
 No. 13 Staff Serjt. Dowd.
 No. 5 Staff Serjt. B. Brown.
 No. 748 W.O., G. Reid.
 No. 706 Lce.-Corpl. J. S. Jones.
 No. 1 Pte. H. W. Allen.
 No. 157 Pte. C. Skidmore.
 No. 657 Pte. O. E. Carlson.
 No. 666 Pte. J. Coleman.
 No. 1580 Pte. F. M. Noble.
 No. 1603 Pte. C. W. Crawford.
 No. 7867A. Pte. A. G. Gruber.

Army Veterinary Corps.
 Capt. M. Henry.
 Maj. W. A. Kendall.

Postal Corps.
 Capt. C. S. Cunningham.

Army Pay Corps.
 Lt.-Col. A. G. Farr.

AUSTRALIAN NURSING SERVICE.
Nursing Sisters.
 Miss E. A. Conyers, Matron-in-Chief, A.A.N.S.
 Miss G. Wilson, Principal Matron.
 Miss J. B. Johnson (Sister), No. 2 Aust. Genl. Hosp.
 Sister E. S. Davidson, Mens.
 Sister A. G. Douglas, No. 1 Aust. Genl. Hosp.
 Sister J. Twynam, No. 2 Aust. Genl. Hosp.
 Sister R. J. Langford, No. 1 Aust. Aux. Hosp.
 Sister M. Hobler, No. 3 Aust. Aux. Hosp.

Australian Army Nursing Service.
Sisters.
 Miss A. Gordon-King.
 Miss B. Pocock.
 Miss T. Radcliffe.
 Miss M. Kellett.
 Miss P. Humbert.

Staff Nurses.
 Miss Creswell.
 Miss E. H. Chapman.
 Miss A. King.
 Miss E. Peters.
 Miss D. D. Richmond.

Miss F. E. Spalding.
 Miss V. Wionsaki.
 Miss O. Lee-Brown.
 Miss B. M. Gibblings.

Australian Army Nursing Sisters serving in British Hospitals.
 Miss M. Burns.
 Miss T. Cosby-White.
 Miss B. Earl.
 Miss F. R. Herring.
 Miss E. Shepherd-Cook.
 Miss E. A. Eglington.
 Miss E. Mossey.
 Miss L. F. Smart.
 Mrs. McHardie-White.

Australians attached to Q.A.I.M.N.S.R.
 Miss B. Coffey.
 Miss A. J. Florey.
 Miss A. D. McKibbin.
 Miss A. Wilkinson.

NEW ZEALAND TROOPS.
Auckland Mounted Rifles.
 Lt.-Col. C. E. R. Mackey.
 Staff Serjt.-Maj. J. T. Notley, N.Z. Staff Corps.
 Wellington Battalion.
 Capt. W. S. Cooper.
 No. 15/71 Serjt.-Maj. J. P. Pridaux.
 Waikata Battalion.
 No. 12/649 Serjt. A. J. Bond.
PIONEER BATTALION.
 2nd Lt. R. J. L. Thompson.
 New Zealand Divisional Train.
 Lt.-Col. G. T. Hall.
New Zealand Medical Corps.
 Lt.-Col. P. C. Fenwick, M.B.
 Maj. C. E. Maquire.
 Maj. F. T. Bowerback.
 Serjt.-Maj. W. M. Duncan.
 Serjt. H. A. Jones.
 Serjt. F. V. Fisher.
 Pte. L. J. Anderson.
 Pte. P. Munro.
 Pte. T. Wright.
 Pte. J. A. Biss.
 Pte. D. Jack.
New Zealand Veterinary Corps.
 Lt.-Col. A. R. Young.
New Zealand Army Pay Department.
 Lt.-Col. J. W. Hutchen.
New Zealand Nursing Service.
 Sister Vids McLean, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Sister Fanny Wilson, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Sister Francis Price, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Sister Ida Willis, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Sister Elizabeth Nixon, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Sister Marie H. Wilkie, N.Z.A.N.S.
Staff Nurses.
 Cora Anderson, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Jean G. S. Ingram, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Edith A. Harris, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Emily Nutsey, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Eva M. Livesey, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Mildred Ellis, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Daphne R. Commons, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Rose Fanning, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Janet A. Moore, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Mary McBeth, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Elizabeth Porteous, N.Z.A.N.S.
 Agnes Williams, N.Z.A.N.S.

Hospital Ship HMHS Grantully Castle, Mediterranean Expeditionary Force August 1915 - April 1916

In late August Janet and Alice were transferred to the HMHS Grantully Castle to move wounded soldiers from the clearing stations at Lemnos and Salonica to Egypt, then later from Malta to Naples.

Luna Park, Heliopolis 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital (1AAH) April 1916 - July 1916

In April 1916 they were sent to 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital (1AAH) Luna Park, Heliopolis to nurse the wounded before they were sent home. "The place was most unsuitable, even for a convalescent hospital...We only had little spirit lamps and saucepans belonging to the sisters themselves for sterilising the instruments and our supply of sterile (?) water came from the cook house" Luna Park possessed a skating rink, as an auxiliary hospital the rink became a ward holding about 400 beds. This building had a galvanised iron roof & had a way of getting unbearably hot. It was an exceptionally hot summer, during they May of which we experienced a heat wave. The temperature was above 120° Fahrenheit (49 degrees Celsius) for five hours each day in our ward. It was quite impossible to take temperatures as one could not shake the thermometer down below 102° Fahrenheit (39 degrees Celsius) and as soon as one stopped shaking up it went again to the top of the thermometer. What had once been a monkey house was converted into a sisters' mess; this also had a galvanised iron roof, and often during the hottest part of the day the spoons & forks were almost too hot to handle.

1AAGH Harefield, England July 1916 - October 1916

In July 1916 Janet and Alice were sent to 1AAGH Harefield, England which a convalescent hospital, then in October, they were moved to the 3rd Australian General Hospital (3AGH) at Kitchener Hospital Brighton. Here "The other (Radcliff) had charge of an acute surgical flat of 110 beds (almost the same number of beds as we had in the whole of our Hobart Gen. Hosp.) For staff there were sister (in charge) four staff nurses, and four orderlies." In contrast to the heat waves of Egypt, the winter of 1916 was the coldest on record for 30 years.

3AGH Abberville France April 1917 - August 1917

3AGH Abberville France was a tent hospital when Janet and Alice arrived in April 1917. Once the huts were built they accommodated up to 30 patients. Alice wrote "We two were fortunate in being appointed to take charge of two acute surgical wards" "Sister Radcliff was given charge of the acute ward and I was given the theatre ward of 22 patients".

1st Australian Causality Clearing Station (1ACCS) Tasmania Camp near Hazebrouck between Outtersteene and Baillieu, Belgium August 1917 - December 1917

In August Janet and Alice were sent to 1st Australian Causality Clearing Station (1ACCS) Tasmania Camp near Hazebrouck between Outtersteene and Baillieu, Belgium which was described as being "established behind the force in the British Second Army—almost literally "in the front line."

Alice wrote "Sister Radcliff and I were on Theatre teams (Surgeon, Anaesthetist, Sister, Orderly) and at one time we were six hours at the operating table, off for four hours rest, on again for 24 hours, and when two relieving teams arrived we worked a 16 hour period; this heavy load lasted about a fortnight."

Janet wrote "Heavy during the attacks on Polygon Wood and Passchendaele life was very strenuous working in the theatre on the surgical teams...A surgical team was made up of, a surgeon an anaesthetist, a Sister and an orderly...This was an insight into 'destructive' surgery prevention of gas gangrene necessitating removal of contaminated muscular tissue to a large extent...Our accommodation consisted of Nissen huts one for mess and sitting room, and others with partitions for sleeping in with only a tin roof over our head and Hun planes visiting frequently in the neighbourhood, life at first seemed a trifle dangerous until we fully realised what a tiny space in the world was occupied by each individual. One day some Hun hate was dealt out to us in the shape of shells, one of which fell in the centre of the hosp. grounds near where ambulances were loading lads

which fortunately was the dud of the day, those which fell around the grounds did a good deal of damage, though no lives were lost."

In November 1917 Janet was made acting head sister at the clearing station.

1AAH at Harefield, England December 1917 – December 1918

In December 1917 both Alice and Janet returned to England. Alice married on December 20th and was unable to continue work, but Janet was sent back to 1AAH at Harefield where she worked until December 1918. Janet's sister Helen was also there working as a masseuse, which was an early name for a physiotherapist.

"During 1918 Harefield was admitting and evacuating hundreds of patients a week, it made the work very heavy." "Food was a big difficulty during that year, as even a crust of bread could not be wasted, it was hard to regulate it. Army bread was rather unappetising to a patient with much appetite...it was necessary to try and toast and fry it to make it palatable as if they did not eat it we had not substitute.

Alice wrote that Janet "served here during the Pneumonia Influenza Epidemic until her repatriation to Australia in January 1919".

England to Australia January 1919 – March 1919

Janet had mitral heart disease and anaemia when she returned to Hobart on the Magha in March 1919. The army wanted to discharge Janet in May but this was contested by the Principal Matron who "pointed out that an injustice has been done in this case. Sister Radcliffe requires complete rest for the treatment of her case and has been in bed for the last four weeks. She is entitled to receive such treatment prior to Discharge". Janet's discharge was delayed until November 1919.

Australia

In 1921 Janet applied for an £8 Warm Clothing Allowance, worth about \$650 today as she had used her own money to buy warm clothes when she was in France/Belgium. The army replied "London records show that Nurses who were sent to France subsequent to the above mentioned date were well equipped for the cold climate." Janet contested the decision with a statutory declaration saying "I did not receive a free issue of any of the articles listed in F.G.M No. 392" She was then informed "With reference to your application for the Warm Clothing Allowance, I have to advise you that I am in receipt of advice from our central office to the effect that as you were not in France during the winter of 1916-17 your claim has been disallowed."

Death

By 1922 Janet had returned to nursing and was working in Melbourne. She died in her sleep on 30 November 1922. She was 39.

Memorial

Janet had been a member of the Returned Sisters Association in Hobart. The association raised enough funds to build a small memorial rest home for returned nursing sisters in Lindisfarne and commissioned the memorial plaque to remember Janet and the other two Tasmanian nurses who lost their lives as a result of the great war. The plaque is now displayed at the Anglesea Barracks in Hobart.



Memorial Plaque at Anglesea Barracks, Hobart



Sister Janet Radcliff



Sister Alice Gordon King and Sister Janet Radcliff

More than 2,860 women joined the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) and went overseas in the First World War.

The nurses had to be aged 25 to 40, educated, unmarried and qualified with at least three years of training. Although nurses were given officer rank in 1916 they were paid around

half of a man's salary for the equivalent rank which was often less than a nurse's pre-war pay.

While the AIF insisted the nurses be unmarried, society expected them to be provided for by either families or husbands and while some nurses did get extra money from their families, their age and the fact they were not married meant that many did not have families, and some, like Janet, were actually sending money home to their widowed mothers.

There was little support for returned nurses. The War Pension Act gave nurses a pension if they were disabled or invalided during the war, but the pension was based on the level of their army pay and how badly the outcomes of going to war had affected them. Because the AANS was not a permanent force the nurses were not entitled to a service pension. Government ministers were reluctant to change the situation as they were concerned it would be unfair to other veterans and might set a precedent. It was 1936 before nurses were able to get a pension if they had tuberculosis or were unemployable or of retirement age, 1958 before they could get hospital treatment in repatriation hospitals, and 1973, when Janet would have been 90, and most of her war nursing friends were dead, before nurses could get nursing home care if they had a chronic illness.