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Peter Rees. *Other Anzacs: Nurses at War 1914-1918.* Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2008. Illustrations. xviii + 363 pp. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-74175-549-7.

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Nurses from Down Under go to the Front in World War I

Peter Rees has written a wonderful book on the nurses from Australia and New Zealand who served during World War I. Using diaries and letters written by over thirty women who served, Rees follows their movements, activities, working and living conditions, and times of hardship and happiness from departing Australia and New Zealand, to traveling through the Suez Canal to Cairo, then on to Gallipoli, and later the western front, and to witnessing horrors beyond anyone's expectations. Along with these women's writings, Rees also uses primary sources from physicians and soldiers, official reports, and news clippings to give a more complete picture, and he does all of this in a very readable manner.

Luckily for Rees (and the readers) the women who served left behind a gold mine of personal writings describing not only what they did as nurses, but also what their lives were like and how they spent their free time. This provides a much more accurate picture of life in and near a war zone, especially for medical units, than do official military records. Rees also did the necessary research to provide some background information on many of the women.

One group of women left their homeland in the fall of 1914, traveling six weeks to their assignment in Cairo. There, the nurses were either very busy with little time to eat or sleep, or they bored and miserable because there was little to do. Some nurses were married and one in particular was lucky enough to cross paths with her husband on a regular basis, even though married nurses were not supposed to be accepted in the Australian Army Nursing Service. Others had admirers who they either wished to see more often or tried to avoid. A few got engaged during the war and their joy, as well as grief at times, is well documented. In either case, they wrote about it and these writings were preserved. The women also recorded tensions with coworkers and/or supervisors, as well as what they did for recreation

In April 1915, some of these women were on hospital ships less than one-half mile off shore watching Allied soldiers being mowed down at Gallipoli. This was their first close-up encounter with the war. The hospital ships were again anchored right off the coast in September 1915 when over ninety thousand sick and wounded were evacuated from the area. Medical personnel worked around the clock, and because they were located amid warships, they were also in the line of fire from the enemy. The *Marquette*, carrying both hospital supplies and munitions, was torpedoed and sunk in the Gulf of Salonika in October 1915. Ten of the forty nurses were killed and some of the survivors were invalids for life.

Moving to the western front, Rees covers many of the same nurses who were transferred from Cairo to France and England, along with others who either were already there or who joined at a later date. The nurses worked at a variety of units–large general hospitals; hospital trains; hospital ships; casualty clearing stations; and closest to the front lines, field ambulances. He discusses the types of wounds they confronted, the effects of gas warfare, and shell shock, as well as the women's reactions to the death of patients, friends, and relatives.

After the war ended, some of the nurses had problems readjusting to the normalcy of civilian life. Some could not continue working in the field of nursing; others could not work at all. The governments of Australia and New Zealand (just as the government of the United States) did not recognize the women as military veterans, denying them much-needed healthcare and financial benefits available to returning soldiers. Rees follows many of the women through their lives so the story does not abruptly end with the end of the war.

Although this book deals frequently with unpleasant

subjects, it is easy to read and should appeal to the general population as well as scholars. Rees has a pleasant writing style that carries the reader along and the book does not feel at all like a textbook or strictly educational material. The only thing with which this reviewer takes issue is that, although all the quotations and other personal information about those mentioned in the book are well documented, there are no citations for statistics and other narrative on the war itself. It definitely would have been helpful to readers to know the sources for such information. With that small criticism, this volume is a welcome addition to the collection of works on nursing during the Great War. It is sufficiently scholarly to be of interest to those who study World War I, women's history, nursing history, or Australian/New Zealand history. But it also proves that history can be written in such a way as to be comprehensible to the popular audience.

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