

Kelly, Alicia Mary (1885–1942)

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Alicia Mary Kelly (1885?-1942), nurse, was born in Mayo, Ireland, daughter of Richard Kelly, farmer, and his wife Jane, née Bell. Nothing is known of her childhood or migration. She completed nursing training at the (Royal) Melbourne Hospital in 1910, nursed at the Eye and Ear Hospital, then worked at a private hospital run by Dr Kent Hughes.

On 29 March 1915, aged 29, Alicia Kelly enlisted as a staff nurse in the Australian Army Nursing Service, Australian Imperial Force, giving her mother, who lived at Mount Dandenong, as next-of-kin. In April she embarked from Sydney with reinforcements for the 1st Australian General Hospital and reached Egypt in time to receive the thousands of wounded who poured into the hospital after the landing at Gallipoli. From 28 August until the evacuation of Gallipoli she made at least two trips on *Euripides*, transporting severely wounded men home to Australia. Her feelings about this sudden introduction to mass human destruction remain unknown, Alicia having been quiet and retiring by nature. In April 1916 she was posted to France with the 1st A.G.H. and served with it until December when she joined the 29th Casualty Clearing Station, Rouen. On 3 April 1917 she was promoted sister, and on 31 July was transferred to the 3rd Australian C.C.S.; while there she became one of only seven Australian nurses to win the Military Medal.

The usual method of recognizing an army nurse's service was to award her the Royal Red Cross or its associate; the Military Medal was reserved for 'conspicuous gallantry under fire'. Sister Kelly was on duty at the 3rd A.C.C.S. during an air raid. Orders sent the rest of the medical staff running for their lives as bombs fell. A padre discovered Sister Kelly sitting in one of the hospital tents holding a patient's hand. When he asked why she had not left with the rest she answered 'I couldn't leave my patients'. She had covered their heads with enamel washing basins or urine pots to give them some feeling of security; she knew that the basins would be useless against flying shrapnel or a direct hit but there were no helmets. Her quiet courage enabled her patients to come through the bombardment 'with confidence'. Her medal was presented to her at Buckingham Palace on 16 October 1917.

From August Sister Kelly worked at the 3rd A.G.H. before returning to England in March 1918 for transport duty and then to Australia in May. She was also awarded the Royal Red Cross, 2nd class (A.R.R.C.), on 1 January 1918. She was sister-in-charge on the voyage home and on their arrival at Fremantle the men she had cared for presented her with a silver cup which they had made. Soon after her discharge Alicia Kelly married on 7 August in Perth Arthur Rupert Chipper, a corporal in the 10th Light Horse, A.I.F., and a farmer at Bullaring. After many years at Bullaring the Chippers moved to a farm at Narrogin before retiring for health reasons. They had no children.

At the outbreak of World War II, despite poor health deriving from her 1914-18 war experiences, Mrs Chipper (whose nickname was 'Loll') returned to nursing and was appointed matron of the Old Women's Home, Woodbridge, Guildford. She died of pneumonia on 16 April 1942 at Midland, Perth, and was buried in Karrakatta cemetery with Anglican rites.