



**'Too awful for words': Australian military nurses at Lemnos in 1915**

**A presentation by Dr Kirsty Harris**

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Australian nurses serving in the Australian Army Nursing Service and the British Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve in 1915 worked on, or transitted through, the Aegean island of Lemnos during the Gallipoli campaign. This presentation outlines their work and their experiences during the unsuccessful landing on the peninsula.

**Biography:**

**Dr Kirsty Harris** is an Honorary Fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. She was awarded the 2008 C.E.W. Bean Prize for Military History for her PhD on the work of Australian women in World War I. Her research interests include the experiences of Empire women at Gallipoli in 1915.

**Handout:**

**'Too awful for words': Australian military nurses at Lemnos in 1915**

Lemnos was the intermediate base for allied troops during the Gallipoli campaign. As part of the medical effort, Australian military nurses were employed on hospital and transport ships, at No. 3 Australian General Hospital, and at No 2. Australian Stationary Hospital.

More than 200 Australian professional trained nurses were involved, both from the Australian Army Nursing Service and the British Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve as part of the medical service deployed to assist both sick and wounded men.

Hospital ship nurses were on Lemnos before the landing on 25 April and continued on the 'ferry service' until all troops had left Lemnos in January 1916. Nurses at 3 AGH and 2 ASH served from August 1915, dealing with the wounded from the August offensive and later the vast numbers of sick men from the deteriorating conditions on the Peninsula.

Nursing conditions on Lemnos were rudimentary when the nurses first arrived, and the continual influx of men made a posting on Lemnos one of the most strenuous of World War I. Australian nurses at Lemnos and on hospital ships showed that they could rise to the circumstances, cope with frontline conditions, manage men and provide nursing under great physical discomfort.

**Bibliography**

Kirsty Harris, *More than Bombs and Bandages: Australian nurses at work in World War I*, BigSky Publishing, Newport, NSW, 2011.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/thrutheselines/6367278495/in/photostream/>

Photographs of the Third Australian General Hospital at Lemnos, Egypt & Brighton (Eng.) / taken by A. W. Savage 1915-17, State Library of NSW (available online)