

Edith Mary Chester  
Nurse

Edith Mary Chester was born in Kilmore to John and Therese Chester, nee Halford, in 1883 and she was their only child.

Edith trained at the Melbourne Children's Hospital (MCH). On June 30, 1910 in the Argus it was reported that Nurse Chester was successful at the Royal Victorian Trained Nurse's Association's final examination along with seven other MCH nurses and many others from around the State.

Staff Nurse Chester enlisted in Melbourne on October 13, 1915 stating that she was single and 32 years of age with eight years experience as a Staff Nurse and Sistership. She was then living at Armidale and her parents were living at The Avenue, Windsor. She was one of 2304 confirmed Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) nurses who departed for overseas service joining approximately 150 nurses already serving in overseas hospitals.

Staff Nurse Chester embarked from Melbourne aboard HMAT Orsova on November 12, 1915 in the AANS 1st Australian General Hospital (AGH), Special Reinforcements. Edith reported for duty at the 1st AGH on December 9, 1915 in Egypt, then transferred to 1st Auxiliary Hospital, part of 1st AGH mid January 1916. She embarked for England in mid January 1917 aboard the Essington from Alexandria and was then posted to the 13th General Hospital at Rouen, France on the 9th February 1917.

On May 25, 1917 Edith's parents were notified that she had been admitted to 14th General Hospital, Boulogne, France with a mild illness. Edith was soon transferred to a convalescent home and a week later was granted leave until July 25. She was next attached to the 3rd AGH where she worked till mid November 1917 when she was transferred to the 38th Stationary Hospital, not far behind the lines along the Western Front. By June 1918 Edith was working at the 24th Casualty Clearing Station attached to the 38th.

Edith proceeded on leave to Italy via Southampton in September 1918 during which time she was promoted to Sister on October 1, 1918. She returned from leave in January 1919 reporting for duty at the 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital in London.

Sister Chester returned to Australia aboard the Kenilworth Castle on the 14th February 14, 1919 and her military appointment was terminated in June 1919. Edith received the award 'Mentioned In Despatches' which was gazetted in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette on October 6, 1919 "relating to the conspicuous service by Sister Chester whilst serving with the Australian Imperial Force". She was awarded the 1915/15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal in November 1920.

The Malvern Standard of Saturday February 28, 1920 reported that Sister Chester would be in charge of the Prahran Baby Welfare Centre and was also appointed as city inspectress by the Prahran Council. It was reported that "She received her training at the Children's and Foundling Hospitals, and has a special knowledge of health matters generally. Sister Chester put in three years service abroad as a military nurse during the great war. She has a brightness and home-likeness of manner, coupled with an active mind, which should fit her well for the important duties that she has undertaken in Prahran, and parents will undoubtedly find her a sincere friend."

Edith did not marry and died on March 13, 1948 in Malvern and was privately interred.

Contributed by the Kilmore Historical Society

