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## The McBurney Nurses

On Wednesday, 31 March 1920, General Sir William Birdwood, commander of the ANZACS during most of World War One, visited Kilmore to acknowledge the contribution made by local volunteers who had served in World War One. It was a big day for Kilmore. He presented medals to the veterans present, and unveiled a roll of honour which included Staff Nurse A M McBurney.

Researching World War One veterans has made us aware that there are errors in the various local memorials and rolls, for on Kilmore's St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Roll of Honour there is listed Staff Nurse Agnes E McBurney. Does this mean one nurse or two?

Parents John McBurney, JP, local chemist, married Matilda Fawcner on April 7, 1869 and in Kilmore over the next 21 years they had four boys and eight girls, including seventh born Sarah Abigail in 1880, ninth born Agnes Emily in 1885, and last born Marian Alice in 1891. Sarah, Agnes, and Marian became nurses, probably nursing at the Kilmore Hospital early in their careers and later in various hospitals and health services in Melbourne.

Despite extensive research, including contacting the National Archives of Australia, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation and the Kilmore Hospital, there is no evidence that the McBurney sisters enlisted for service in World War One. In relation to the name listed on the Kilmore Honour Roll, "A M McBurney", it is unlikely that this is Marian as she was known as Marie. More likely A M should be A E McBurney.

However it is possible that Agnes, known as Lil, having not volunteered for overseas service, served in a unit possibly based in Melbourne looking after returned servicemen recovering from wounds or illness. It could be she joined the Australian Red Cross for a time during World War One.

Agnes was made a Life Governor of the Kilmore Hospital in January 1920 and there are several references to Marian, Agnes and "Nurse McBurney" in the local papers in the years immediately after World War One. Interestingly their older brother Robert Hunter McBurney is listed on the National Archives of Australia "Discovering Anzacs" web site but with no information about his involvement in World War One. Robert, a chemist, was about 40 years old in 1918.

Robert died in 1948 in Flemington, Sarah in 1964 in Elsternwick, Agnes in 1976 in Armadale and Marian in 1971 in Elsternwick. The three McBurney nurses did not marry.

Please contact the North Central Review or the Kilmore Historical Society, if you can provide any additional information.

Photo - St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Kilmore - Roll of Honour - now located in the Kilmore Memorial Hall

# ROLL OF HONOUR

* COLIN H. CAMERON.	JOHN W. MCDONALD.
JAMES R. THOMSON	CLARENCE V. GRONN.
ALEXANDER MCDONALD.	WILLIAM A. DRURY.
WILLIAM M. PROUDFOOT.	JOHN B. CAMERON.
WILLIAM E. ROBINSON.	* JOHN C. BOWERS.
* JAMES N. ROBINSON.	JOSEPH D. MCLEAN.
EVAN H. CAMERON.	JOHN C. LUCKIE.
NEIL W. CAMERON.	NORMAN H. BOWERS.
* WILLIAM N. FISCHER.	HAROLD V. WORTLEY.
ALFRED H. BERRY.	ALASDAIR CAMERON.
FRANK A. HIDDLE.	ALLEN MCLAURIN.
JOHN MCKINNON.	ALEXANDER W. CUMMING.
ERNEST A. PORTBURY.	JOHN BROWN
ALEXANDER ALLEN	ANGUS S. McNAB

## STAFF NURSE

AGNES E. MCBURNEY

1914 ÷ 1919