

# The Australia College of Nursing Mid-Career Nurse Leadership Program Sister Mary Eleanor (Ellie) McGlade

## The Mary Eleanor (Ellie) McGlade Scholarship for Rural Nurse Leadership

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) is the national leader of the nursing profession. ACN's Mid-Career Nurse Leadership Program aims to enhance nursing leadership to improve health care for all Australians. A mid-career nursing leadership program enhances the capacity and capability of registered nurses who generally have more than 6 years of professional experience and have the capacity to strongly influence organisations, team cultures and practices.

Nursing leadership is required at all levels to meet the future challenges of the health and aged care systems. ACN defines leadership as being about influencing others to accomplish common goals. It is a complex and multifaceted process, which involves providing support, motivation, coordination and resources to enable individuals and teams to achieve collective objectives. ACN's approach to leadership is inclusive and patient / consumer focused, meaning that the promotion of nurse leadership is not at the exclusion of others, and at all times aims to improve health and healthcare for patients / consumers and the community more broadly.

Nurses have a central role to play in navigating the future challenges of the health and aged care systems and ensuring the provision of quality, innovative and cost-effective care. Within nursing there are projections of a workforce shortage over the next ten years, not only in Australia but across health systems worldwide. Retention of nurses who have experience and have the capacity to influence organisations, team cultures and practices should be a key strategy of policy holders in meeting the future challenges of the health care system.

The Mid-Career Nurse Leadership Program is a career consolidator, a dynamic course which empowers nurses to lead change in a rapidly changing environment. Throughout the six-month program participants are empowered to discover their inner leadership capacity and learn to lead change in a rapidly reforming environment.

By taking part in this innovative course, registered nurses will be empowered and inspired through personal development, career coaching and learning sets. Mid-Career Nurse Leaders will be equipped with the skills to lead health workplace cultures through innovation, redesign, and change. Participants will have honed the ability to develop high-performing teams that facilitate a culture of success and achievement.

**Sister Mary Eleanor (Ellie) McGlade**



Sister Mary Eleanor 'Ellie' McGlade, NX 76275 2/13th Australian General Hospital overcame a very difficult childhood to lead a fulfilling and meaningful life in caring for others.

Ellie was born on 2 July 1902 in Armidale in the New England area of country NSW, to Francis Aloysius and Agnes Beatrice McGlade. Soon after Ellie's birth her mother passed away. It seems that she died for post-natal reasons, as in later life, Ellie "... specialised in an area that would perhaps allow her to help young mothers in a way that her mother had not been helped ..." (On Radji Beach, p.45).

When only three years old, Ellie was orphaned after her father passed away in 1905. She went to live with her aunt Mrs Walter Scott of Wallalong near Maitland in the Hunter Valley area of NSW and Mrs Scott became her guardian. From her pre-school years Ellie "... attended St Ursula's Convent in Armidale NSW as a boarder, at first sleeping in a cot beside Mother Berchman's bed". Who was Mother Berchman?

St Ursula's was founded in 1882 by a group of exiled Ursuline nuns from Daderstadt in Germany. Operating as a boarding and day school for girls, St Ursula's was owned and operated by the Ursuline nuns until the mid-1970s. The magnificent Convent Chapel, for which Ellie donated the Crucifix was opened in 1930 (see later?).

As she grew older, St Ursula's became a beloved childhood home for Ellie with which she stayed strongly connected for the rest of her life. When completing her Intermediate Certificate in 1920 she won prizes for singing, violin, piano, and Christian doctrine and had already begun to care for girls who fell ill.

The school report of 1921 noted that 'owing to the kind solicitude of their College Infirmarian no one has a chance to get seriously ill before she is reported and nursed back to normal by the indefatigable Ellie'. On leaving school Ellie visited relatives in Scotland and Ireland, returning to begin training as a nurse at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney.

Ellie graduated in 1927 with Certificates in General Nursing, Cooking and Dispensing and became a Mothercraft nurse in the Hunter Valley. McGlade often visited St Ursula's Convent in Armidale and was well remembered there even after she left school. The 1927 School magazine remembered Ellie as a 'winsome toddler... playing about with Rex, the collie, or her family of dolls' and later 'as a girl of amiable disposition, still loved by those who surround her ... untiring and unselfish in her care of the sick...".

Ellie appears in the 1927 and 1929 NSW Register of Nurses as Mary Eleanor McGlade of Wallalong, Hinton, so it seems that after her graduation she returned to base herself in the small town of Wallalong in the Hunter Region of NSW.

In 1930 as a young nurse Miss Ellie McGlade donated the Crucifix for the new Ursuline Convent Chapel when it was being built at Armidale (The Catholic Press, NSW, 13.2.1930). A decade later as a mature woman, good fortune at last came Ellie's way. The Newcastle Sun on 22 February 1940 reported that a nursing sister Mrs [sic] E. McGlade "... who gave her address as Wallalong a small township north of Morpeth, where she was at the time attending one of her many cases..." won fourth prize of 300 pounds in the State Lottery.

In January 1941 McGlade enlisted in the Australian Army Nursing Service. Called up on the 8 August Ellie was posted to the 2/13th Australian General Hospital and she embarked for Singapore and Malaya on the Hospital Ship Wanganella, arriving in September 1941. Ellie's her Paybook photo

shows a lovely woman with an intelligent, attractive face and it also says that she had brown hair and grey eyes.

In Malaya she worked with the 2/13th AGH in Tampoi, near Johore. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the fall of Singapore became inevitable, most Australian personnel were evacuated from the island, but the 2/13th AGH remained until 12 February when they too were evacuated.

Ellie McGlade was one of 65 Australian nurses who left Singapore aboard the SS Vyner Brooke, but two days later, on 14 February 1942, the ship was bombed by the Japanese and many lives were lost. Those who could swim or made it onto rafts or lifeboats headed for the nearby Bangka Island. It is not known how Ellie made it to Radji Beach, but there she was with her 21 other nursing friends on that fateful day on 16 February 1942.

The fact that she was brutally murdered by the Japanese troops who captured Ellie and the other AANS nurses on Radji Beach is incomprehensible to the civilised mind. With her other Nursing friends and Mrs Betteridge, a civilian woman, Ellie was ordered to walk into the water where all the ladies were so cruelly executed, except for Vivian Bullwinkel, the one survivor.

Sister Ellie McGlade is commemorated on the War Memorial on the High Street, Wallalong and on the Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial. At the Last Post Ceremony on 12 February 2016 her photograph was displayed at the Pool of Reflection at the AWM.

The Australian War Memorial in Canberra has a collection of biographical notes relating to Ellie. The notes cover her early years at Armidale, her training at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital at Camperdown Sydney, her service with the 2/13th AGH and the events surrounding the "SS Vyner Brooke" sinking and the Radji Beach killings. There is also a newspaper cutting of a Memorial Service for Ellie whose memory continues to live on; a truly remarkable woman whose loss was widely felt.

Principal Sources:

Australian Nurses Memorial Centre

<https://australiannursesmemorialcentre.org.au/index.php/stories/>

Suite 11/431 St Kilda Rd

Melbourne

Last Post Ceremony on 12 February 2016 at the Australian War Memorial Canberra

- On Radji Beach by Ian Shaw
- Michael Pether Auckland New Zealand
- Public Records