



Other Anzacs: Nurses at War 1914-1918

Peter Rees

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I had my right arm under a leg, which I thought was [the patient's], but when I lifted it I found to my horror that it was a loose leg with a boot and a puttee on it. It was one of the orderly's legs which had been blown off and had landed on the patient's bed. The next day they found the trunk about 20 yards away.

By the end of The Great War, 45 Australian and New Zealand nurses had died in overseas service and more than 200 had been decorated. These were women who left for war on an adventure, but were soon confronted with remarkable challenges for which their civilian lives could never have prepared them. They were there for the horrors of Gallipoli and they were there for the savagery the Western Front. Within 12 hours of the slaughter at Anzac Cove they had more than 500 horrifically injured patients to tend on one crammed hospital ship, and scores of deaths on each of the harrowing days that followed. Every night was a nightmare. Their strength and humanity were remarkable. Using diaries and letters, Peter Rees takes us into the hospital camps, wards, and tent surgeries on the edge of some of the most horrific battlefronts of human history. But he also allows the friendships and loves of these courageous and compassionate women to enrich their experiences, and ours. This is a very human story from a different era, when women had not long begun their quest for equality and won the vote. They were on the frontline of social change as well as war, and the hurdles they had to overcome and the price they paid, personally and professionally, make them a unique group in Anzac history. Profoundly moving, *The Other Anzacs* is story of extraordinary compassion and courage shown by a group of Australian and New Zealand women whose contribution to the Anzac legend has barely been recognized in history. Peter Rees has changed our understanding of that history forever.

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