

100 Years New Zealand Military Nursing: New Zealand Army Service - Royal New Zealand Nursing Corps 1915-2015

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Reviewed by Herb Farrant

Very few authors ever get the opportunity to rewrite and enhance a previous work. Yet this is the case here where the author was a co-author with the late David Corbett on a similar work published in 1990. In this case the title was *New Zealand Military Nursing* covering up to that date 75 years of military nursing. At that time it was one of the few volumes which traversed this subject in detail in an area of our military history long disregarded and overlooked. In particular it highlighted just how difficult it had been for this service to gain acceptance by politicians and the male-dominated hierarchy in the armed forces.

This earlier work totalled some 240 pages in fifteen chapters with six appendices, starting with the nursing services offered by a few very determined women during the Boer War. The new volume now covers some 540 pages in 24 chapters with nine appendices. This give testimony to the author's diligence and ability through plain hard work to deliver a more comprehensive commentary on a dedicated humanitarian service which has supported our armed services in times of peace and war over the past 116 years.

As a very detailed work on some remarkable people and personalities, it is also a superb volume that injects some gender balance into a male-dominated subject area. Able therefore to clearly stand on its merits as a military history, it also joins a growing range of welcome titles that extend our knowledge of our military heritage for posterity. What makes this book unique as a modern version of the original is the effort made to record the service (often in detail) of all those over that period who served in the nursing service. Whilst that aspect of this work was already a part of the original volume more research and knowledge has expanded these lists and is one of the prime reasons why virtually every chapter and appendices of this book have been expanded. Further the slightly enlarged format and greatly increased page numbers have allowed more photographs, many now in colour. At the same time the photographs in the original volume have been digitally enhanced and often repositioned to greater effect.

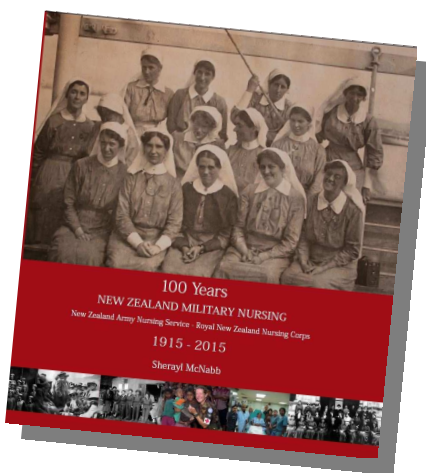
Being essentially a history, the story of military nursing follows a chronological sequence, but is now greatly expanded -the recorded events of World War I have doubled in length. There are new chapters of a more discursive nature where the original chapter nine contents have been replaced by four chapters in greater detail, commencing with one titled

'Politics, Policy and Duties Extraordinaire'. Thus in effect the subject and its history and the events which shaped its development are now viewed in greater depth, aiding our comprehension of those times.

However for me the most compelling section of this work after its reconfigured coverage of World War I is chapter 24, titled 'War-Peace Keeping-Humanitarian Aid-Natural Disasters, 1990-2015'.

Well written and superbly illustrated in colour it is a road map of what our military and the nursing personnel have been doing abroad over the past 25 years. Thus it covers events served by our armed forces in places and locations we as the public have heard vaguely about but never with the degree of informed knowledge that we should aspire to as nation. In one place I learnt and gained greater appreciation of the role and achievements of our armed services in modern times. In so doing I also realised that the value of the dedicated service recorded herein has never received the publicity or exposure it deserves, at least until now, thankfully in this book.

Those who know the author will not therefore be surprised at the outcome achieved in a very readable, enjoyable and worthwhile addition to the library of any historian, military or otherwise. Clearly the ability to upgrade and expand a previous work has worked. As with the photograph of the Colonel-in-Chief, Princess Anne in the front piece, one can therefore reliably conclude that what follows is a well and truly commendably worthwhile and nicely presented contribution to our military history and heritage.



Available for \$75 plus postage from 11 Haig Street Wairoa or email sherayl.nzans@xtra.co.nz