## **BEMBRICK, Amy Glenthora**

Amy Bembrick was born on 26th October 1893 at Grenfell N.S.W. the second daughter of Alfred Bembrick (1861-1934) & his wife Elizabeth (nee Fowler; 1866-1941).

She was also the cousin of Henley T. S. Bembrick of Beecroft who was killed in World War I (1914-1918) and whose name appears on the Beecroft War Memorial.

The family eventually moved from Grenfell to Epping. In January 1917 it was announced that she had successfully passed her final exam, and was appointed sister at the Western Suburbs Cottage Hospital, at Croydon, where she has been nursing for a number of years.**1**

Amy served during WWI in the Australian Army Nursing Service at Salonika, Greece.

Her enlistment papers state: trained nurse, single, 23 years of age, enlisted 10th May 1917; address: Sutherland road, Epping (parents’ address).

She attended the Beecroft Methodist Church and her name is recorded on their WWI Roll of Honour.

She embarked from Sydney, on board the RMS *Mooltan* on 9th June 1917

Her elder sister, Miss Gladys Bembrick, died after a long illness just prior to her leaving for the front.

Many friends congregated to bide farewell to Nurse Bembrick, although she was absent through the death of her sister, and Nurse Fanny Noble, only daughter of Mr. W. H. Noble, of Epping.**2**

Amy Bembrick was related to Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) nurse, Gladys Boon, and they shared similar experiences during the First World War.

Amy was recruited following a request from the British Government for Australian trained nurses to staff four British military hospitals in Salonika in northern Greece.

Most patients at the military hospitals were British soldiers and Bulgarian prisoners of war.

All the nurses in Salonika felt the bitter cold and snow in winter and the intense heat in summer in hospitals set up in tents or primitive huts. In winter there was not enough fuel for the braziers to heat the tents and by morning the blankets on patients were stiff with ice. Most nurses suffered from malaria which was endemic and those with recurrent malaria were repatriated to Australia.

She was posted briefly to 52nd British General Hospital (BGH), then to 50 BGH, a hut hospital at Kalamaria on the outskirts of Salonika where she remained for most of her service.

She had been promoted from Staff Nurse to Sister in Salonika but this was not ratified until just before she left England in February 1919 where she obtained three months leave from 25 March to do a course in domestic economy at the Battersea Polytechnic, London.

Amy would be awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal for her services.

Amy boarded SS Canberra to return to Australia on 23 July 1919 and was discharged on 15 September 1919.**3**

On 13th July 1922 at Woodford Bridge, Essex, England Amy Bembrick, 28, married Charles William James Gumbley, 30, whom she had met while nursing in Salonika. He was then Corporal Bill Gumbley serving with the British Army. He served with the 26th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment. He was invalided out after Enteric and Rheumatic Fever, via Addington Park War Hospital, London. He furthered his education during the early 1920s, graduating from Pembroke College, Oxford, in Modern History. He would become an Anglican minister.

It was a quiet wedding, with the bride being given away by her father, with Miss Norman, of Sydney, being the bridesmaid.**4**

In December 1923 the Oxford couple departed from London for India where Charles Gumbley would serve as a missionary. With them was 8-year-old Heather Gumbley.**5**

In April 1927 it was reported that “Nurse Amy”, with her husband and two children, had relinquished their missionary work in India and have returned to Australia.**6**

Between 1930 and 1937 Charles Gumbley would be Clerk in Holy Order, at Maitland, N.S.W. Amy would be preoccupied with home duties. Their address was 68 Church-street, Maitland.**7**

A son, John William Bembrick Gumbley was born on 25th December 1935 but died on 1st February 1937, after a short illness.**8**

In March 1937 the family departed for England, their proposed address in UK to be Woodford Bridge, Essex (the home of Charles’ parents).

The family consisted of Revd. Chas. Gumbley (clergyman); Mrs. Amy Gumbley; Miss Heather Gumbley, 15; Miss Alison Gumbley, 11; Miss Millicent Gumbley, 9.**9**

The family returned to Australia in May 1938, finding the English climate too severe. They family consisted of Revd. Chas. W. Gumbley; Mrs. Amy Gumbley; Miss Heather B. Gumbley, Miss Alison Gumbley; Miss Millicent B. Gumbley, Master Tony B. Gumbley. Charles was to seek a new church appointment.**10**

From 1939 to 1945, the family lived in Adelaide where Rev. Gumbley was rector of St Luke’s Church of England, Whitmore Square. During this time Amy was ‘camp mother’ to hundreds of children from needy families who attended annual boys’ camps and she also helped in providing free hot lunches for two hundred children during the winter months.**11**

In 1945 the family moved to Hunter’s Hill, Sydney.

In 1949 their home at 2 Ambrose-street, Hunter’s Hill, was occupied by Charles William James Gumbley (clerk in holy orders), Amy Glenthora Gumbley (home duties), Alison Bembrick Gumbley (nurse) & Millicent Bembrick Gumbley (home duties).**12**

Amy Gumbley died on 13th June 1949, aged 56, at All Saints Anglican Rectory, Hunters Hill, Sydney, where her husband had been rector since 1945. She was survived by three daughters, who all trained as nurses, and a son. Her issue was Heather (Mrs. R. W. L. Crosby), Alison, Millicent, Tony, John (decd.).

She is commemorated on the Grenfell World War I Memorial and the Epping World War I Roll of Honour.**13**



**Bibliography**

1 Forbes Times (NSW: 1899 - 1902; 1912 - 1920), Friday 12 January 1917, page 3

2 Young Witness (NSW: 1915 - 1923), Friday 8 June 1917, page 4; Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Saturday 9 June 1917, page 8; AWM records

3 AWR (womenaustralia.info)

4 Methodist (Sydney, NSW: 1892 - 1954), Saturday 14 October 1922, page 8; Ancestry.com; AWR (womenaustralia.info)

5 Passenger List, Departure London, England 15 Dec 1923 to Madras, India

6 Methodist (Sydney, NSW: 1892 - 1954), Saturday 16 April 1927, page 3

7 Electoral Rolls 1930, 1935 & 1936

8 Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate (NSW: 1876 - 1954), Wednesday 3 February 1937, page 9

9 1937 22 March – Passenger List, Arrivals London; Vessel: Moreton Bay, from Brisbane

10 Grenfell Record and Lachlan District Advertiser (NSW: 1876 - 1951), Monday 21 February 1938, page 3

11 AWR (womenaustralia.info)

12 Electoral Roll 1949

13 AWR (womenaustralia.info); Advertiser (Adelaide, SA: 1931 - 1954), Wednesday 15 June 1949, page 16