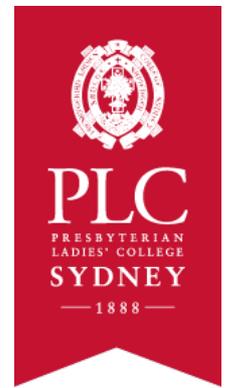


STORIES FROM THE ARCHIVES:

RUTH PALMER – A MALTA HEROINE AND PLC EX-STUDENT



PLC Sydney ex-student Ruth Palmer died on 20 February 2016, aged 103 years. As a nurse in Malta during World War II, Sister Palmer was awarded the Royal Red Cross (2nd Class) for bravery.

Because of its strategic position in the Mediterranean, Malta was one of the most intensively bombed areas during the war. Indeed, the small island received 3000 bombing raids during the Siege of Malta, between June 1940 and November 1942. Sister Palmer was in the thick of the action.



On Anzac Day 1942 the hospital where she was stationed was bombed by the enemy. The *Times of Malta* recounted the events:

“When bombs fell in the vicinity of the hospital, one exploded in a ward killing a patient. Miss E.R. Palmer displayed great courage and presence of mind in protecting the helpless patients by covering them with mattresses and pillows regardless of her own safety. Bombs continued to fall nearby but she still showed the same coolness, courage and command of the situation while awaiting the stretcher bearers to remove the helpless patients.”

It was for these acts of bravery that King George VI approved her award of the Royal Red Cross (2nd Class) later that year. She continued to serve as a nurse in Malta and then on various troopships en route back to Australia after the war.

Ruth Palmer attended PLC from 1926 to 1928. She was a boarder from Bulli, New South Wales, and while a student sang in both the Junior and Senior choirs and was fourth in her form in 1927. She sat the Intermediate Certificate in 1928.

Ruth and her sister Joan, also a PLC student, both studied nursing at Sydney Hospital. In May 1939, after graduating, they sailed for England and Europe on a holiday. They left the ship in Naples and travelled in Italy and Switzerland but then, fearing that war was imminent, went to England.

What had started as pleasure tour around the world changed course dramatically! They joined the QAIMNS (Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service) and nursed many of the wounded soldiers evacuated from Dunkirk, then were transferred to Alexandria, Egypt and then on to Malta.

After the war Ruth continued her nursing career in New South Wales and retired in 1973. For the last several years she lived at the Thomas & Rosetta Aged Care Facility in Wahroonga, where she continued to care for fellow residents, enjoyed bus outings and sang in the choir.