



“One wonders why all this strife should be”: The war diary and photographs of Private Lawrence Nicholas Kennedy, 2/4 Field Ambulance, 7 Division AIF

This presentation introduces 24-year-old NX21854 Private Lawrence Nicholas Kennedy and follows him through his first two years of service as a nursing orderly with the 2/4th Australian Field Ambulance during World War II. The presentation highlights the many ways in which primary sources, such as letters, diaries, sketches and photographs, contribute to our military history by humanising and personalising the war experience.

Like many service personnel before and since, Private Kennedy documented both the everyday and the extraordinary in his diary. He sometimes wrote little, other times quite a lot. A few lines here and there noting the local geography or recording the movements of his unit were interspersed with vivid descriptions of peoples and places, or poignant observations of the ‘scars and ruins’ that war leaves behind.

Kennedy’s photographs bring his diary writings to life – training in Ingleburn and Bathurst, voyaging across the seas, wandering through the streets of Jerusalem and Damascus, and trudging over the rugged Kokoda Track.

As well as providing a valuable first-hand account of the challenges confronted by medical personnel, Private Kennedy’s diary and photographs allow a raw and unpolished insight into the suffering endured by those who cared for the broken soldiers.

Dr Jan McLeod is the great-niece of Private Kennedy.

TIME AND VENUE

10:30AM Saturday 1 April 2023 at The Auditorium, Anzac Memorial Hyde Park, Hyde Park South, corner Elizabeth and Liverpool Streets, Sydney CBD. Admission is free of charge but a donation would be appreciated. For info call 0419 698 783 or email:

president@militaryhistorynsw.com.au

Speaker – Dr Jan McLeod



Dr Jan McLeod holds a PhD in History from the University of Newcastle, where she worked in academic, research, and professional positions across various faculties since 2001. Prior to this, she was a secondary school teacher, adult and community educator, and student nurse. In 2021, Jan retired to pursue her own research and writing.

Jan's research interest is Australian military medicine during World War II. She has presented widely at conferences and community events, and twice served as an invited judge for the C.E.W. Bean Prize for Military History.

Her first book, *Shadows on the Track: Australia's Medical War in Papua 1942-1943*, was published in 2019 as part of the Australian Army History Collection. In 2020, Jan was awarded an Australian Army History Research Grant to assist with the writing of *Mopping up the Casualties: Caring for Australian soldiers in the South-West Pacific Area 1943-1945* (forthcoming).

Jan's most recent publication, *All The Broken Soldiers: Private Kennedy's War*, was released in November 2022. This book is based on the wartime diary of her great-uncle who served as a medical orderly with the 2/4th Australian Army Field Ambulance during the Middle East and South West Pacific campaigns.

Our Venue

