O'Grady, Amy Veda

Key Address : Roman Catholic Presbytery, Clifton Grove, Preston

Rank and Unit : Staff Nurse, Australian Army Nursing Service (July 1915 - November 1918)

Embarked : RMS Morea
Date of Embarkation : 24 August 1915
Place of Embarkation : Melbourne

Service Number : **Enlisted :** 10/08/1915 **At :**

Born At : Castlemaine **Educated At :** Queen Charlotte Street Hospital, London
Date of Death : 12/08/1916 **Aged :** 39
Place of Death : Sisters Isolation Hospital, Calaba, Bombay, India
Buried At : Kirkee 1914-1918 Memorial, Sewree, Bombay, India

Occupation : Nursing Sister
Marital Status : Single **Religion :** R.C.

Next of Kin/Family : Parents Daniel and Ellen O'Grady (nee Egan)
Brother Rev. Father James Henry O'Grady

Eyewitnesses : "Volunteered for India, left Egypt for Bombay with 49 other Nurses. Worked at Freeman Thomas Hospital. Died of Cholera 12.8.16 (1 of 2)" (Death Certification 17.10.16)

Notes : Amy O'Grady was the first of only two women connected to the district to die in the service of her country during the War (there were around a dozen that served), and the link appears to have been marginal at best.

Her attestation noted both parents were dead and next of kin was her brother, Father James Henry O'Grady of the Roman Catholic Presbytery in Clifton Grove, Preston. He is noted as taking charge of the Preston parish in February, 1914 after previously assisting at Brunswick. Amy's own address was listed simply as North Carlton.

Official Victorian records suggest that James was born 1874, other siblings being Ellen (1865), Sarah (1868), and Eliza, who died at 15 days in 1866. All were born in Chewton, but for unknown reasons, there is no record of Amy O'Grady's birth, nor that of Mary (Mrs Archer).

Nurse O'Grady's application to join the Nursing Service reveals she had 13 years medical experience, her mandatory three years training at the Melbourne Hospital with later qualifications from the Queen Charlotte Street Hospital in London.

Precious little is recorded of her military service – she served initially in Egypt with No. 10 AGH, and in July, 1917 was shipped to India where she died of cholera in the Sisters Isolation Hospital, Calaba, Bombay, but no record remains of the period of confinement. One other Australian nurse, the Irish-born and trained Sister Kathleen Power died the following day from the same disease; two others later after being returned to Australia.

The Hospital in Bombay and other parts of India were relics of the British military of the 1800s and it was originally planned they be used to treat the wounded from Mesopotamia (Iraq), but instead the Australian nurses (148 in total) were sent after the Indian government requested assistance in dealing with an outbreak of cholera early in 1916.

Given the nursing staff were over a thousand miles from the nearest combat zone and treating the civilian population, there was some debate over whether they were simply engaged on extended Home Service before they were granted full Active Service status. Despite this. nurses that served in India and in Egypt (after April, 1916) were deemed ineligible to receive the British War Medal which was restricted those that saw service in a defined theatre of war. Amy O'Grady's war time service was acknowledged on a special Honour Roll of women that served unveiled in St. Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne; the Roll did not identify casualties, Kathleen Power also appears of the Board.

The Rev. O'Grady was still in charge when the current Sacred Heart Church was constructed at a cost of £15,000 and opening on 18 July, 1926, the original wooden building removed to become St. Gabriel's in Reservoir. He was noted as celebrating his sacerdotal Silver Anniversary in the following September and was still noted at the Church at the end of the Second World War. He died in the St. John of God Hospital in Brighton in 1955 at 81 years of age.

O'GRADY.— On the 12th of August,1916, at Bombay, India, Sister Amelia V. O'Grady, Australia Army Nursing Staff, much loved sister of Catherine D. Harris, Mary A. Archer, Ellen I. Shaw, and Rev. J. H. O'Grady (Preston). Requiescat in pace.

O'GRADY. - On December 4, at St. John of God Hospital, Brighton. Very Reverend James Henry O Grady,, parish priest. Preston, in his 82nd year.- Requiescat in pace. Solemn Office of the Dead will be chanted at the Sacred Heart Church, Preston, this- day (December 5), at 8 p.m.