

Pauline Blanche Hempsted

Section Menu

B.1908 D.1945

At St Margaret's 1922

Pauline, also known as Blanche, Hempsted enrolled at St Margaret's in 1922. After graduating, she trained at Brisbane General Hospital between 1934 and 1938 and then enlisted in the Australian Army in 1941. She was attached to the 13th Australian General Hospital in Malaya/Singapore where she cared for patients wounded from attacks by the Japanese.

Captain Pauline Hempsted was one of 65 Australian nurses and over 250 civilian men, women and children evacuated on SS Vyner Brooke, one of the last ships to leave Singapore before its fall three days later. The Vyner Brooke was bombed by Japanese aircraft and sunk in Banka Strait on 14 February 1942. Sister Hempsted was among 32 of the 65 nurses who survived the sinking and were captured as Prisoners of War. Records indicate she died in the Muntok prison camp of illness on 19 March 1945 at age 36. Her grave was moved after the war to the Jakarta War Cemetery.

Pauline is one of many inspirational St Margaret's Old Girls who, after leaving the school gates, were quickly thrust from girls to courageous women serving for Australia in times of conflict, often in places far from home shores.

Resources: <https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/631826> and <http://muntokpeacemuseum.org/>



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