

## The Annual Ivan Barko Prize



The 2020 Ivan Barko Prize is awarded to Irene Rogers (Central Queensland University) for her article ‘A Gift for France: the Australian Bluebird Nurses of the Great War’ published in *The French Australian Review*, number 68, Australian Winter, 2020.

In July 1916, a group of twenty-one Australian trained nurses known as the ‘Bluebirds’ left Australia for the Western Front. They were under contract with The New South Wales Division of the Red Cross Society (ARC) to work for the French Red Cross Society (FRC) or the French military authorities and were called the Bluebirds because of their distinctive uniform. The Bluebirds became the only group of trained and registered nurses sent to France by any Red Cross branch in Australia during the Great War. Whilst some of their achievements have been acknowledged, little is known about the connections they made with French people, culture and institutions. Irene Rogers’ article explores those relationships through the evidence they left behind in journals, diaries and letters and provides a human and personal view of their experiences.

The Bluebirds’ story is unique—it is an interesting and important contribution to the story of French-Australian connections formed during WWI. The article draws from research Rogers undertook for her PhD at Central Queensland University.

Dr Rogers has worked as a humanitarian nurse in many conflict and post-conflict zones around the world and continues to be a Registered Nurse. As well as other commitments, in 2020 she worked as a volunteer street nurse with the growing numbers of homeless people on the Sunshine Coast.

Written in a clear, engaging style and illustrated with seldom-seen photographs, ‘A Gift for France’ is well worth re-visiting and is a worthy winner of this year’s Ivan Barko Prize.

The annual ISFAR Ivan Barko Prize is awarded by the ISFAR Committee on the recommendation of the editors of *The French Australian Review* to the author of the best article published during the preceding year. Named after Professor Ivan Barko to mark his long and distinguished service to ISFAR, particularly as editor of *Explorations* and its successor *The French Australian Review*, this prize is intended to stimulate research in all areas of French Australian relations.

‘A Gift for France: the Australian Bluebird Nurses of the Great War’ may be downloaded at: <https://www.isfar.org.au/category/explorations/no-68/>

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