

Stories from the Honour Boards

Stories of those who served and are remembered on the Honour Boards in the Merrington Anzac Memorial Peace Chapel at Saint Andrew's Uniting Church

Booklet Number 215

LEONARD GRAHAM BROWN 1888 - 1950



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Lieutenant Colonel Leonard Graham Brown MC, MID

Leonard Graham Brown, widely known as “Bruno” was very popular with his contemporaries, both in his field of medicine and on the sporting field where he played Rugby Union in the England XV for twelve years.

When war broke out, Leonard interrupted his medical training in order to serve in the British 44th Field Ambulance, 14th Division from 1915 – 1918. He was Mentioned in Despatches and awarded the Military Cross for his service. L Graham Brown was reported as being an excellent surgeon and administrator of equable, imperturbable temper and courteous manner.¹

Family and early life

Leonard Graham Brown - also known as L Graham Brown - was born in Brisbane on 6 September 1888. Leonard was the third child of John Graham Brown and Amelia nee Morris.²

Leonard’s father was born in Lurgan, County Down, Ireland and came to Australia from Ulster in 1885. John had been employed in railway work in Ireland and joined the railway department in Brisbane on his arrival. (John G Brown later became Traffic Superintendent and General Manager of the Northern Division of the Queensland Railway Department.³)

In 1885, the year of his arrival in Australia, John Graham Brown married Amelia Morris. Amelia died in 1930 and, in 1932, John married Miss Mabel Lange Zillman, a music teacher.

Leonard Graham Brown, like his brother Robert Graham Brown, used his second forename “Graham” and records pertaining to him usually refer to L Graham Brown or Graham Brown.

He was also well known by his nickname “Bruno”. On the Saint Andrew’s Honour Board he is listed as L Graham Brown. To avoid confusion with his brother R Graham Brown, however, “Leonard” will be the name used in the following story.

Leonard’s older brother, Robert Graham Brown was born in 1887 and his older sister, Agnes Graham Brown, in 1886. His brother, Robert Graham Brown (R Graham Brown) is also listed on the Saint Andrew’s Honour Boards; his story has been written under separate cover.

Education

Leonard Graham Brown was educated at the Brisbane Grammar School (BGS) from 1903 until 1907.

The *BGS Magazine* for April 1907 shows that LG Brown, (ME) - which signifies Engineering Matriculation - completed his Sydney Senior Examination with 2 Bs and 8 Cs in Physiology, English, German, Latin, Greek, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, Mechanics and Chemistry.

It was reported in the *BGS Magazine* that, in 1908, L Graham was a Junior Master at the Ipswich Grammar School.⁴

Sporting accomplishments

As well as doing well academically, Leonard was very proficient at sport. He did well in swimming, running, shooting and rowing but excelled as a gymnast and at rugby football.

Leonard was the Junior Gymnastics Champion of Queensland in 1905. There are many photographs of him in the *BGS Magazine* showing his sporting and academic achievements while he was a student there.



*Brisbane Grammar Football Captains
1907*

*WJ Reinhold * (2nd), LG Brown (1st)
R Willcocks (3rd) AB Collins (4th)*

** See Booklet # 16, Reinhold*

Some of these are shown in the online Photo Gallery courtesy of the Brisbane Grammar School. Leonard also competed in the Cadet Rifle Match at the Toowong Rifle Range in Brisbane on 15 November 1907 and was a member of the winning team. He competed with the BGS team in the Challenge Cup, which was won by BGS and presented by HRH, the Prince of Wales in 1903 and 1908. In 1908 Leonard played football for Queensland against AF Harding's Anglo-Welsh XV. He competed with the Past Grammar School Football Club who were runners up in the Senior Premiership of 1908.

Queensland Rhodes Scholarship winner

Leonard Graham Brown won the Queensland Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford in 1909 and entered Balliol College in 1910 where he stayed until 1913. He rowed for the college in the Oxford Summer Eights, a four-day intercollegiate rowing regatta, which takes place in May each year.

From 1910 - 1912 Leonard played rugby football for the Oxford XV and captained the team in his last year.

Leonard completed his Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree and Natural Science Physiology with 2nd Class Honours in 1912.

Following this, he entered the London Hospital as a medical student from which he qualified in Medicine in the early English spring of 1915.

Represented England in the International XV Team

Leonard made his international rugby union debut on 21 January 1911 at St Helen's, Swansea in the Wales vs England match. He continued playing rugby in the England International XV over the next 12 years, except for the time of the Great War. In total he played 18 times for England attaining Captain in 1922. He was on the winning side on 14 occasions. He captained Blackheath against France in Rugby Union in 1921 and was also captain in his final match on 21 January 1922 when Wales played England at Cardiff Arms Park.



*1911 England XV team that defeated France 37-0
"Bruno" Brown is in the centre row, 2nd from the right.*
(<http://www.espnscrum.com/england/rugby/image/92449>)

Marriage

Leonard Graham Brown married Margaret Jane Menzies of Edinburgh in December 1915, ten months after his enlistment. Margaret's father, Alexander Menzies, was from Sumatra.

Enlistment and service

Leonard Graham Brown applied and had his services accepted. He was commissioned as a temporary Lieutenant in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) on 22 February 1915.⁵

From the time of his enlistment, he served with the 44th Field Ambulance and saw active service in France and Belgium; the 44th was part of the 14th (Light) Division.

The following extract from *The Long, Long Trail*⁶ explains the role of the British Field Ambulances:

The Field Ambulance was a mobile front line medical unit (it was not a vehicle), manned by troops of the Royal Army Medical Corps. Most Field Ambulances came under command of a Division, and each had special responsibility for the care of casualties of one of the Brigades of the Division. The theoretical capacity of the Field Ambulance was 150 casualties, but in battle many would need to deal with much greater numbers.

The Field Ambulance was responsible for establishing and operating a number of points along the casualty evacuation chain, from the Bearer Relay Posts which were up to 600 yards behind the Regimental Aid Posts in the front line, taking casualties rearwards through an Advanced Dressing Station (ADS) to the Main Dressing Station (MDS)...

When it was at full strength a Field Ambulance was composed of 10 officers and 224 men. It was divided into three Sections. In turn, those Sections had Stretcher Bearer and Tented subsections. RAMC officers and men did not carry weapons or ammunition.

Service with the 44th Field Ambulance⁷

After his commissioning, Leonard immediately joined the 44th Field Ambulance which was in training at Crookham, about 7 km from Aldershot, England. The unit moved out of Crookham on 20 May 1915, heading for Southampton and then to France. The 44th arrived at Le Havre at 3am on 22 May, 1915.



A Field Ambulance at work

(An artist's impression from Pinterest)

The 44th were apparently glad of the training they received at Aldershot as it prepared them for very long treks, some 20km a day, to reach their destination of Ypres.

The unit spent some time near a village called Hillehoek where a divisional rest station under canvas was set up to receive the sick of the division. This camp provided them with the amenities of a decent hospital.

Leonard is mentioned in *With the Forty-Fourths*⁷ in a description of the recreational time the unit spent there:

*We spent most of our leisure moments at football and cricket. In the inter-section football tournament, **Lieut. Brown** who was an English Rugger captain, apparently played his first game of soccer, much to the discomfiture of some of the opposing small players.*

At the end of July at Ypres, the unit felt the full brunt of the war. The constant movement of casualties from the frontline meant they worked almost continuously for forty-eight hour periods on some occasions. It was difficult bringing the wounded cases through Ypres, as it was under constant enemy shelling.

These conditions were described by one member of the unit in *With the Forty-Fourths*, viz:

Who can forget the awful explosion of the huge shells which plumped into Ypres? The gun, when in action, fired every fifteen minutes, and was timed by our officers, so that we usually had seven or eight minutes in which to work and then had to scatter to avoid the next shell. Buildings were demolished wholesale and the roads, after a little attention from this monster, which lay hidden in Houthulst Forest, looked a pretty sight.

From Ypres, the 44th with the 14th Division, moved to Winnezele on 12 February 1916 and then on towards Amiens arriving some 10 days later. It began to snow and was bitterly cold. The unit moved off on the 1st March, on a very bad road, reaching Fosseux where a chateau was taken over for use as a hospital. It was described thus:

The Ambulance running the line had its headquarters in Arras itself, at the Ecole Normale. The hospital we formed at Fosseux accommodated over 200 cases. By this time that mysterious complaint, trench fever, had become very common and we had a great many cases... All the Division's blankets were sent to be fumigated, many being literally alive with lice.

The unit moved towards the nightmare of the Somme on 30 July 1916 until 9 September when they moved through Amiens and back to Dernancourt. They witnessed the bombardment at Bernafay Wood on 15 September with the Division reported to have done well and taken Flers. This did not prepare them for the work ahead:

Who can forget our treks to and from Bernafay Wood, and the famous sunken road just before Flers? Then there was that terrible broken-wrist feeling, through having only two bearers to a stretcher. The worst experience, though, was having to pass each journey, the sadly disfigured bodies of our own chums. We longed to carry them in, and bury them, but the orders were 'No'. We did, in the end, manage it.

Awarded the Military Cross

For good work during their stay on the Somme, the 44th won decorations for deeds or work, which have not been recorded or at least uncovered at this time. The 44th Field Ambulance secured 1 DSO (Distinguished Service Order), 4 MCs (Military Crosses), of which Leonard was awarded one, 1 DCM (Distinguished Conduct Medal), 18 MMs (Military Medals) and a Croix de Guerre.

After the Somme, the 44th moved to Arras in January 1917 and then Bellacourt in April.

In June 1917, Leonard was promoted to temporary Captain⁸ and on 4 June 1917 was awarded the aforementioned Military Cross.

The 44th returned to Ypres with the 14th Division and on 22 August the Division was part of the attack at the Menin Road. It was a rough week for the stretcher bearers.

Fighting continued until October on the Lille gate side of Ypres and the bearers worked very hard. The carrying was in long stages, very difficult and risky.

Christmas came and went and in January, 1918 the 44th retreated to south of Crozat Canal where they set up camp for two months. For the rest of the year they moved back through Ypres, Amiens, then Abbe Farm, Locre, Messines, Tourcoing and Wattrelos until the war ended.

Leonard was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1918 while working with the RAMC Company Department in France⁹ where he was mentioned in despatches.

At the end of the war, Leonard also was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.¹⁰

Post War

Leonard authored a brochure following his experience in convalescent hospitals in France entitled *Military Convalescent Depots in France during the Great War* which was reported in *The Queenslander*, Brisbane in 1921.¹¹ An extract from this article reads:

... Dr Brown shows that every possible influence was put forward to encourage men to make an effort to get well, and this demanded a treatment which made the hospital as agreeable as possible. Wherever a competitive spirit could be introduced in work or sport that practice was followed, and in every instance it was the mere average man who was catered for by arranging that his efforts, however small, would be of benefit to the reputation of his company or division.

Between March and August 1918, the convalescent depots returned no fewer than 300,000 men as reinforcements to the Front, so nobody is likely to doubt Dr Brown's statement that these hospitals played no small part in the events which brought a check to the onrushing enemy...

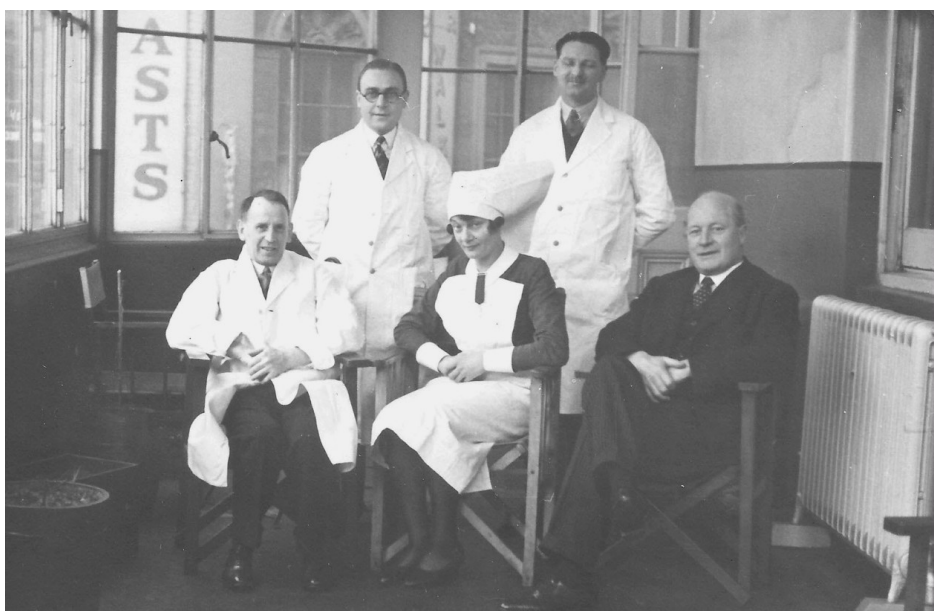
After demobilisation Leonard returned to Oxford and completed his Bachelor of Medicine (BM, MA) in 1919 and Doctor of Medicine (DM) in 1920.

He worked at Charing Cross Hospital as Aural Registrar and later was elected as an Aural Surgeon. He worked as an Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist at the North Middlesex Hospital until his return to Charing Cross Hospital as a surgeon in



Charing Cross Hospital

1932 and later as Medical Superintendent. As well as his qualifications as BM and DM, Leonard also gained MA, MB, ChM, MRCS, England, and LRCP London.¹²



Dr LG Brown in 1935. ENT Ward, Charing Cross Hospital

He was a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons (FRCS) from 1924 and an extract from his biography from the FRCS reads:

...Graham excelled at mastoid surgery and the enucleation of tonsils in children. ... He had a large successful private practice as an Aural Consultant at 32 Devonshire Place, London and, later, at 82 Portland Place, London. He made valuable contributions to the literature of his specialty, served as an examiner and was President of the Section of Otology in the Royal Society of Medicine, England in 1944...

The Premier of Queensland (1942-1946), Mr Frank Arthur Cooper, was reported as being one of Dr L Graham Brown's patients and underwent a mastoid operation while in England in 1945.¹³

World War 2

During the war of 1939-1945, Leonard served as a Medical Superintendent at the Charing Cross Hospital.

Sport

Leonard continued his love of sport, becoming the Vice-President then President of the Rugby Football Union in 1948-1949. He kept up his interest in participating in sport throughout his life, in later years being particularly fond of golf and skiing.

Passing

Leonard Graham Brown died on 23 May 1950 in the Charing Cross Hospital, aged 61. He was cremated at Golders Green. His wife Margaret had predeceased him on 7 July 1930. He was survived by his two daughters.

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Researched and written by Miriam King, Brisbane. August 2018.



Lest we forget