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 43

DONALD CHARLES CAMERON

1879-1960

This booklet remains the property of Saint Andrew’s Uniting Church. Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.
Lieutenant Colonel Sir Donald Charles Cameron  
KCMG, DSO, VD.

Donald Charles Cameron was born in Brisbane on 19 November 1879, son of John and Sarah Annie née Lodge. His father who was born in British Guiana was a Member of the Legislative Assembly in the Queensland Parliament representing Mitchell from 1893 to 1896 and North Brisbane from 1901 to 1908. From 1903 to 1911 John Cameron MLA served as an Elder at Saint Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Brisbane.

Donald Charles Cameron attended Toowoomba Grammar School from 1893 to 1895 and Brisbane Grammar School from 1895 to 1897. At the age of 18 he became a clerk in the Queensland Meat Export and Agency Co., of which his father was Chairman of Directors. He toured Europe and Asia in 1899. While in China during the Boxer Rebellion he attached himself to an American infantry regiment and accompanied it to Peking. He returned to Australia in 1901, volunteered for service in the South African War and was commissioned Lieutenant on 19 March in the Queensland Imperial Bushmen Contingent. He reached Cape Town in May and for the next year participated in operations in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony. On 16 June he risked his life to rescue a wounded trooper and was mentioned in despatches. His unit was disbanded in June 1902.

From 1902 to 1914, Donald Cameron, with his brothers, managed their family property, Kensington Downs near Longreach and was involved in their associated pastoral and other business activities. He visited Europe and the United States in 1903. His name is recorded on the 1911 and 1912 communicants’ roll at Saint Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Brisbane.
He married Evelyn Stella Jardine on 18 February 1914 at Saint John’s Anglican Cathedral in Brisbane and the couple visited China and Japan on honeymoon.

The Great War broke out soon afterwards. He enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force on 30 September and was appointed Captain in the 7th Light Horse Regiment. He transferred to the 5th LHR and embarked from Sydney on HMAT *Persic* for Egypt in December as second-in-command of “C” Squadron. From 20 May 1915 until the evacuation, his regiment fought as infantry at Gallipoli. He was wounded on 9 June and again quite severely on 28 June in the heroic but fruitless attack on Turkish trenches known as the Balkan Gun Pits. This wound was to trouble him all his life as removal of the bullet just below his ribs was considered too dangerous.

As Major Cameron he rejoined his unit in Egypt on 3 January 1916, serving in the Suez Canal zone and Sinai for the next ten months commanding his squadron in numerous patrols and skirmishes. He fought in the Battle of Romani on 4-5 August. In February 1917 the Light Horse advanced into Palestine and took part in the Battles of Gaza and operations and patrols in the Wady Ghuzze.
He was promoted Lieutenant Colonel on 30 October and took command of the regiment which led in the attack on Beersheba and the advance on Jerusalem.

Lieutenant Colonel Cameron spent the early months of 1918 in England on leave. In April he returned to command the offensives against the retreating Turks which ended in their capitulation at Ziza on 30 October. Here he was faced with the task of protecting the enemy force from Allied Bedouin troops while he arranged the surrender. For his service in the Palestine campaign he was mentioned in despatches three times, awarded the Distinguished Service Order and the Order of the Nile and appointed CMG.¹ “He was an able commanding officer with a gift for obtaining ‘machine-like discipline’ from his men without having to demand it; morale in his regiment was always high.”² The author, Trooper Ion L Idriess who served in the 5th LHR under him said he was ‘never flustered’ in action and he was a ‘cool but quick thinker’.³

After the Great War Donald Cameron returned to Western Queensland and from 1919 to 1931 he represented Brisbane for the National Party in the House of Representatives. He had accepted an invitation to take part in the dedication of the war memorial stained glass windows and mural brass at Saint Andrew’s Presbyterian Church on 6 August 1922 but could not attend on account of illness. He represented the Electorate of Lilley in the Federal Parliament from 1934 to 1937 but it was ill health then that forced his retirement. He represented Australia at the League of Nations Assembly in 1923 and in 1926-27 was a member of a select committee on Commonwealth electoral law and procedure.

¹ Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George  
² SW Wigzell, Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1979  
³ Mentioned by S W Wigzell, ADB, 1979
In parliament he was a leading spokesman for the Returned Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Imperial League of Australia. When a history of the 5th LHR was printed in 1926, he paid the printing costs and presented a copy to every member of the regiment. He commanded the 14th LHR from 1921 to 1924 and was President or Patron of many social organisations. For the Order of St John in Australia he was hospitaller and almoner.

The bottle trees in Anzac Square, Brisbane were donated by Colonel Cameron in memory of the Light Horse Regiments with which he served. In 1932 he was appointed Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George. In World War II he served as Chairman of the New South Wales Recruiting Drive Committee for the Royal Australian Air Force. Sir Donald lived in retirement in Sydney and Brisbane. Towards the end of his life he and Lady Cameron were hospitalised in Brisbane; she predeceased him as did their only daughter. After his death on 19 November 1960, his ashes were buried in accordance with his wishes near the grave of his grandfather in the family cemetery at Home Creek Station near Barcaldine.
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Compiled by Noel E Adsett, Brisbane, March 2015
Lest we forget