

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 168

CHARLES EDWARD ARTHUR FOSSETT 1893—1974



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Corner Ann and Creek Streets
Brisbane QLD 4000
2017

Lieutenant Charles Edward Arthur Fossett

Charles Edward Arthur Fossett was born in Toowoomba in 1893 son of Arthur Dowden and Emily (née Jones) Fossett.

At the time of his enlistment to 26 Infantry Battalion - 1 to 8 Reinforcements on 23 Aug 1915, he was given the number 3047. He was 5ft 6ins (168cm) tall, weighed 10st 11lbs (68kg) and had blue eyes, fair complexion, and fair hair. He named his religion as Presbyterian. His next-of-kin was his father at that time living at Young Street, Annerley.

Research by the University of New South Wales, Canberra at the Defence Force Academy describes him as a draughtsman employed at the Survey Department, Lands Office in Brisbane with his father as next of kin whose address was c/o Plumridge Ltd, Valley, Brisbane. The Lt J Plumridge who gave Charles' wife away at their marriage in Saint Andrew's must surely be connected with this business which adds credibility to these details.

However, at the time of his return from overseas the Darling Downs Gazette of 8 September 1919 gave his employment as in the Toowoomba office of the New Zealand Insurance Office and described Fossett as well known in the city, with respected parents, adding that he was a member of the Presbyterian gymnastic class.

He was one of three children of the marriage, with an older sister Millicent May (b 1.5.1890) and one younger Florence Muriel (b 6.10.1894)

After his overseas service Charles married Winifred Esther Pateman who was born in September 1899 in Middlesex and died in Fran Victoria in 1983 and whose ashes appear to be in the Albany Creek Columbarium along with those of Charles. Their wedding was at Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Brisbane CBD, and was conducted by Chaplain Colonel Merrington on 27 March 1920 in what the newspaper of the day described as 'an interesting wedding'. In the absence of her father, the bride was given away by Lt J Plumridge.

War Service

Charles embarked at Brisbane on HMAT *Itonis*. The *Itonus* was torpedoed and sank in the Mediterranean, 20 December 1916. In April 1916 he is recorded as going to hospital with mumps 'sick' in Serapeum. In June that year he proceeded to Marseilles from Alexandria. He was wounded in action – shell shock - on 6 August 1916 and was admitted to the 1st Australian Rest Station but re-joined his unit on 10 August.

On 5 May he was promoted to temporary Lance-Corporal .

If 1916 was an up and down year for Charles in terms of health and rank, being promoted to Lance Corporal, then reverting to Private, being made a temporary Corporal; and on two occasions being not well and in hospital in April and again in August, 1917 saw a major change in his career path when in April he proceeded on detachment to Army Flying Corps England as observer. This involved his transfer to Perham Downs, a camp on Salisbury Plain. Conditions at No 7 Camp Perham Downs were described by some as being very cold and wet. Late in the month he was selected for training as an observer in the Australian Flying Corps and joined the first school of Instruction at Reading.

He was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant on 30 June and on 22 July proceeded to France. On 30 September he was promoted to Lieutenant.

Charles was accidentally injured on 3 January 18 re-joining his unit only 2 days later and then being selected to train as a pilot. His record shows that in June 1918 he passed in cloud flying, height test, formation flying, and cross country flying. In February 1918 he was engaged in photographic reconnaissance work.



An aerial reconnaissance camera operated by the pilot

(Military History Monthly. Dec 16, 2014)

During the German spring offensive, the squadron moved to the Somme Valley and was involved in artillery spotting operations.

The Squadron's first air-to-air victory came on 6 December 1917; by the end of the war it would eventually shoot down another 15 German aircraft, and would fly a total of 10 000 operational hours.



German IMG 08/15



On 21 April 1918, no. 3 Squadron aircraft became involved in the action leading to the death of the German air ace Manfred von Richthofen. (The Red Baron)

In mid 1918 the squadron was involved in experiments in aerial supply methods for ground troops, and contributed to noise diversion operations in connection with the battle of Hamel. The squadron also dropped smoke bombs and continued its reconnaissance duties during the Allied advance to the Hindenburg Line.

The squadron's last offensive operations took place on 10 November 1918, the day before the signing of the Armistice.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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*Group portrait of the Commanding Officer and Officers
of No 3 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps
Charles Fossett is on the right hand end of the middle row.*

Following the end of hostilities, the squadron was engaged briefly in mail transport duties before being withdrawn to the United Kingdom in early 1919. It was disbanded in February and over the course of the next couple of months its personnel were repatriated back to Australia. Casualties amounted to 32 killed and 23 wounded of which the majority were aircrew; the squadron lost 11 aircraft during the war.

Charles was granted leave for non-military employment, with pay, from 12 May 1919 to 31 July 1919 to undertake an Aeronautics course but this leave was cancelled on May 19 and on 8 July he left England for return to Australia, arriving in Melbourne on 1 September 1919. His appointment was terminated in Brisbane on 14 November 1919. Charles was awarded the Victory Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

The Saint Andrew's Communion Roll for 1921 shows Charles Fossett residing at Felix St Woolloowin.

The *Darling Downs Gazette* of 8 September 1919 reported that "two more troop trains, on which there were 302 soldiers, passed through Toowoomba on Saturday, each being 2 hours late.

The first train on which there were 145 men was in charge of a Toowoomba officer Lieutenant CEA Fossett, son of Mr and Mrs AD Fossett of Hill Street. Lieutenant Fossett who despite his four years service abroad looks remarkably well, said the trip out on the *Friedrichsruhe* was pleasant in every respect and notable for the fact that the Prime Minister Rt Hon WM Hughes travelled on it. Lieutenant Fossett who was cordially welcomed by his mother and immediate relatives and also by the Rev J Lundie served both in Egypt and France, and although in the thick of all the heavy fighting, was not wounded." The paper described Fossett as well known in the city, with respected parents.

Charles died on 25 June 1974 predeceasing his wife who died on 8 June 1983. His ashes are interred in the Albany Creek Memorial Park.



Reference List

Australian War Memorial. Embarkation Roll.
National Archives of Australia—Service record
Queensland marriage and death register
Australian Electoral Rolls

Annual Reports. Saint Andrew's Uniting Church, Brisbane

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Darling Downs Gazette . (Toowoomba) 19 September 1919

Brisbane Courier. 29 March 1920

Written by Bob Warrick
Brisbane
February 2017



Lest we forget