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 14

JOHN LOCKHART GIBSON
1860 - 1944

This booklet remains the property of Saint Andrew’s Uniting Church. Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.
Major John Lockhart Gibson

John Lockhart Gibson was born on 17 July 1860 at Ipswich, Queensland, eldest son of James Gibson, bank manager, and his wife Annie Bush, née Blair. He was educated at Ipswich Grammar School and the University of Edinburgh (MB, 1881; MD, 1885) where he won first-class honours and a gold medal. He later studied in Vienna, Berlin and London.

In 1886 he commenced general practice in Brisbane, then a small city without a medical school or university. On 3 March 1887, he married Mary Florence, née Burkitt in Brisbane. The new Hospital for Sick Children appointed him its first visiting physician and in 1895 its ophthalmologist. After an illness Dr Gibson's practice was restricted to diseases of the eye and ear, nose and throat, and two years later to ophthalmology. He was President of the Queensland Medical Society in 1892, of the British Medical Association (Queensland Branch) in 1908.

At the Third Intercolonial Medical Congress in Sydney in 1892, of which he was Vice-President, Drs Gibson and Jefferis Turner pointed out that anaemia in children could be caused by hookworm. It was not until the Rockefeller Foundation's hookworm survey 1917-19, and the Australian Hookworm Campaign 1919-23 revealed the magnitude of the problem in tropical and sub-tropical areas that eradication began. At the 1892 congress, Drs Gibson, Turner and others also reported ten cases of lead-poisoning in Brisbane children. Overseas, this ailment affected adults; in Queensland, children. The source of the poison was unknown until, in 1904, Dr Lockhart Gibson had the powdered paint from his own house analysed and lead carbonate was found. The paint on wooden Queensland houses dried and powdered in the hot sun.
Most of the affected children were nail-biters or thumb-suckers who carried it on sweaty hands to the mouth. Dr Lockhart Gibson led the campaign to have lead paint replaced in the vulnerable parts of buildings; this was legally required by the Health Act of 1922.

Dr John Lockhart Gibson joined the Australian Imperial Force on 29 April 1915 and left on *RMS Moolton* from Sydney on 15 May to take charge of the ophthalmic department of the 3rd Australian General Hospital on Lemnos. It was well equipped with instruments obtained from London and paid for with £200 sent to him by the Australian Red Cross Society, Queensland Division. Because of its efficiency, his unit had all eye casualties from Gallipoli directed to it. When Major Gibson’s appointment terminated in August 1916, he served on a district medical committee on exemption from military service.

*The RMS Mooltan weighed 9,621 tons with an average cruise speed of 18.5 knots or 34.26 kmph. It was owned by the P&O SN Co, London. Torpedoed and sunk by UC27 on 26 July 1917.*

Dr Gibson was a Fellow of the College of Surgeons of Australasia in 1927 and President of the Ophthalmological Society of Australia in 1940-44. An active Elder of Saint Andrew’s Presbyterian Church from 1910 to 1944, for 21 years Chairman of Emmanuel College and valued Trustee of Brisbane Grammar School, he was a Senator of the University of Queensland from 1920-35. For his sympathetic interest in returned servicemen, the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia conferred life membership on him.
Dr Ronald Wood wrote of him, “He had a good share of Scottish stories which he loved. His was a familiar figure in Brisbane, short, with a brisk walk, helmet and little crooked cane. He was dogged in pursuit of scientific truth and painstaking in his medical work. His stubborn, uphill fight against lead paint showed the born fighter.”

Dr Lockhart Gibson unveiled the War Memorial Window in the northern wall of Saint Andrew’s and the Mural Brass tablet in the Merrington Peace Chapel at the Diamond Jubilee on 6 August 1922. When he died in Brisbane on 30 September 1944, a memorial minute said in part, “He was a Christian gentleman, a man who loved his Church and was regular in his attendance as a means of grace, a fervent lover of his country, and above all, a loyal disciple of Jesus Christ.

“We shall ever treasure the memory of his witty and entertaining conversation and of his friendliness. To his widow, daughter and two sons we offer our deepest sympathy.”

The names of his two sons, Lieutenant Archibald Dickson Lockhart Gibson and Dr John Walter Lockhart Gibson also appear on the Honour Boards of Saint Andrew’s Uniting Church.
Select Bibliography

- University of Queensland, Roll of Honour and Roll of Service, 1914-1919
- Saint Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Brisbane, *Annual Reports* 1910, 1922, 1944.
- Brisbane Grammar School Archives, *Golden Book*
- Archives of Australia, military records

Compiled by Noel Adsett, July 2014
Lest we forget