

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 185

ANDREW MARTIN **1878–1967**



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Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.

Cover Illustration: A photograph of Lieutenant Andrew Martin in *The Queensland Pictorial*, a supplement to *The Queenslander* (3 October 1914). In 1916 he was promoted to Major.

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Major Andrew Martin

By early 1918 Andrew Martin had been at war for a lengthy time with little respite – having enlisted at the start in August 1914 in the Light Horse, he served in the primitive and dangerous foothold on the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915, and then from 1916 a series of battles and relentless desert conditions as the British and Dominion forces advanced through the Sinai and into Palestine.

For his family at home, it seemed even longer. Unlike the British forces the Australian soldiers had no short periods of leave that they could spend at home with their families, and in early 1918 the health of his wife and one of their children prompted Andrew to apply for extended leave. This was somewhat grudgingly granted by the General Headquarters of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and he arrived back in Australia in May 1918.

After discharge in 1918 Andrew resumed his career with the Queensland Railways. He also returned to the Citizen Military Forces (CMF) – in which he had had a long involvement before the War - and retired from the CMF as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1933.

One of his younger brothers – Stewart – enlisted in March 1916 and is the subject of booklet no.144.

Early life and marriage

Born in Petrie Terrace in Brisbane on 11 April 1878, Andrew was the sixth child of James Stewart Martin (a contractor, who had been born Dundee, Scotland) and Margaret Reid née Miller (born in Ayrshire, Scotland).

The family resided in Musgrave Road, Red Hill and were members of the congregation at Saint Andrew's Church in the Brisbane, CBD - Andrew became a member in his own right on reaching adulthood.

He commenced a career with the Queensland Railways by joining as an apprentice clerk in the Traffic Branch of the Southern Division in October 1899. He was confirmed as a clerk in that Branch, and in 1908 became a clerk in the General Manager's Office.

Outside of work he was active in the CMF – spending time in the 2nd Queensland Battalion of the Field Artillery 1901-03, transferring to the 13th Light Horse (Queensland Mounted Infantry) in March 1903 where he was made a 2nd Lieutenant in June 1905, and then promoted to Lieutenant from July 1907. In 1912 he moved at that rank to the 2nd Light Horse (Queensland Mounted Infantry).

That was not the only change Andrew made in 1912. In Saint Andrew's on 31 August 1912 the Rev Dr Ernest Merrington (booklet no.2) married Andrew and Annie Elizabeth Berry from the Brisbane suburb of Chelmer. Her parents were James Kirkhead Berry, a freeholder and Mary Ann née Lacey.

The newly married couple settled in the suburb of Sherwood and started a family (one daughter was born in 1913 and a second in 1915 – after the War a third daughter and a son would be added to the family unit).

Enlistment

Enlistments for the 1st AIF started in August 1914 and Andrew soon applied for a Commission – he was successful and chosen as the Lieutenant in charge of the Machine Gun Section in the 2nd Light Horse Regiment (2nd LHR). He was aged 36 and the papers show that he stood 182cms tall and weighed 79kg.

The 2nd LHR embarked in Brisbane on the HMAT *Star of England* A15 on 24 September 1914, assembling with the rest of the imposing first Anzac convoy at Albany in Western Australia. Thirty-eight troopships (28 for the 1st AIF troops, 10 for the NZ Expeditionary Force) set off on 1 November and the contingents disembarked in Egypt on 9 December 1914.

Gallipoli

The 2nd LHR was deployed to Gallipoli without its horses on 12 May 1915 and Andrew's Machine Gun Section played an important early part with oblique fire across the front at Quinn's Post that proved vital to holding that crucial position during the major Turkish offensive launched on 19 May.



*Gallipoli. A soldier firing a
Vickers .303 machine gun
on Turkish positions*

Australian War Memorial AWM PO8137.003

On 30 May Andrew suffered a gunshot wound when another attack was made by the Turks, but he chose to return to duty. In the middle of June he was promoted to Captain backdated to 15 May, but suffered a bullet wound to his hand and arm on 29 June when the Turks made yet another determined attack, and he was evacuated and treated in the 1st Australian General Hospital in Heliopolis, Egypt.

Andrew returned to duty with the 2nd LHR Gallipoli on 9 August, until being seconded as the 1st Light Horse Brigade Machine Gun Officer on 28 October 1915.



Light Horse Machine Gunners

Egypt and Palestine

After the Anzacs evacuated from Gallipoli in December 1915 they re-grouped in Egypt. Suez Canal defences were pushed out east of the Canal, and on 3-4 August 1916 the British and Dominion forces inflicted a heavy defeat on a large Turkish Army at Romani. The Turks had some revenge when they inflicted a defeat on the pursuing forces at Bir-el-Abd on 9 August, but were then pushed back through the Sinai by the British and Dominion forces.

In August 1916 Andrew was seconded to establish the 1st Machine Gun Squadron – this was part of a re-organisation that used the Machine Gun Section (with two maxim guns) in each of the three Regiments as the basis for a one Brigade Squadron, but

with an increase in the total maxim guns from six to 12. Andrew was immediately preoccupied with the challenges of finding suitable additional troops and organising training to bring them all up to standard. As the commander of the 1st Machine Gun Squadron (1st MGS), he was promoted to Major on 1 September 1916.



The camp of the 1st Australian Machine Gun Squadron, Egypt, 1917

AWM BO2894



*The colour patch of the 1st Light Horse
Machine Gun Squadron*

RELAWM 07941.021

The defeat of the Turks in the Battles of Magdhaba (December 1916) and Rafa (January 1917) led to their expulsion from the Sinai and opened the way into Palestine.

Andrew was present at all these engagements and received formal recognition in 1917 for especially meritorious service in the Battles of Romani, Bir-el-Abd, Magdhaba and Rafa – this was by way of being made a Brevet Major in the CMF (in which his rank had been at Captain).

It is also worth noting that among Andrew's men in the 1st MGS were two who would become prominent in the field of aviation – (later Sir) Wilmot Hudson Fysh (a founder of the Qantas airline and aviation executive) and (later Sir) Ross Macpherson Smith (who with his brother Keith won an Australian Government prize in 1919 for flying in less than 30 days from England to Australia).

At page 44 of his autobiography Hudson Fysh wrote that after speaking to people in the Australian Flying Corps and being told that observers were needed, he was determined to fly:

Major Andy Martin, my C.O., was very doubtful. The rules said no transfers were to be recommended from one technical unit to another; nevertheless he kindly agreed to send my application on.

The application proved to be successful and rest is indeed history.

Signature of Officer Commanding *Andrew Martin Major*
1st MGS

The British and Dominion advance was stalled for much of 1917 by the stubborn Turkish resistance at a line from Gaza to Beersheba, with two unsuccessful attempts to take Gaza before the well-known success at Beersheba in October 1917. Andrew's unit was in support or directly engaged in these actions. He also had the many concerns of a commanding officer as the relentless desert conditions saw many health-related evacuations each month and the need for replacements to be trained and integrated. Andrew himself needed two short periods of rest and recuperation.

However, strains were not just experienced at the front. With the support of his commanding officers Andrew applied for extended leave early in 1918 because:

My wife has relinquished housekeeping on account of her health. She is unable to live by herself with two small children as the strain on the nervous system has become too great, also for the past fifteen months my wife has been compelled to move up onto the Downs on account of the indifferent health of my elder child.

His superiors recommended eight weeks leave in Australia with an understanding that Andrew return after that time, but in the sort of decision that grates with front line personnel, the General Headquarters approved only four weeks.

Andrew embarked at Suez on the HMAT *Wiltshire* A18 at the end of March 1918, and arrived back in Australia on 4 May. His appointment in the 1st AIF was terminated on 30 May 1918 – we don't know the exact circumstances but perhaps he saw that his family couldn't cope with another absence.

Post-war

On his return to civilian life Andrew and Annie resided in Sherwood – first in Kenilworth Street and later at 11 Ferry Road. He resumed working with the Queensland Railways as a clerk in the General Manager's Office, and the family attended Saint Andrew's Church in the Brisbane CBD.

In the CMF Andrew was confirmed as a Major in the 2nd Light Horse (Queensland Mounted Infantry) in September 1918. In 1921 he was transferred to the new 2nd Light Horse Regiment, and three years later appointed to command that unit at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Placed on the unattached list in 1928, Andrew retired from the CMF in April 1933 as an Honorary Lieutenant Colonel. In addition to the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal, his awards included the Colonial Auxiliary Forces Officers Decoration and the Colonial Auxiliary Forces Long Service Medal.



Andrew died in Brisbane on 11 August 1967, aged 89. His remains were cremated at Mt Thompson with Presbyterian rites and his ashes rest there with those of Annie, who had died the year before. He was survived by his son James and three daughters - Jean, Andreina and Mamie.

Select bibliography

Australian electoral rolls.

Australian War Memorial – embarkation rolls.

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Written by

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Buderim

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Lest we forget