

# 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 113

# **WILLIAM OAKLANDS MELLOR 1899 - 1982**



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2016

## Private William Oaklands Mellor

William Oaklands Mellor was born in Brisbane on 11 February 1899, only son of William Duncan Mellor and Amy Blanche née Clark. William had two younger sisters, Amy Vera and Evelyn Louise. The family lived at Southport in 1903 where William's father was a newspaper proprietor. In 1913 they were living at Fortitude Valley and his father's occupation was printer. In November 1914 William's mother died and his father (William Duncan Mellor, then a compositor) and his sisters moved to live at Riverview Terrace, Toowong. The Mellor family had been connected with the Wharf Street Congregational Church since the 1870s. The family was also linked to a property known as Oaklands in the Caboolture district, left to them by William's grandfather, Captain Edmond Mellor, a ship's captain, who died in 1879.

In his youth prior to the outbreak of war and in the early years of the Great War, Naval Cadet William Mellor was an active member for a period of four years in the Social Service Institute Naval Cadet Corps. He enlisted however in the Australian Infantry Force (AIF) on 22 August 1917 at Brisbane when he was 18 years and 2 months old. He could not have enlisted earlier because of his age but he had also received a letter informing him that "no naval cadet shall enlist in the Military Australian Imperial Forces for active service without the written consent of the District Officer."<sup>1</sup> Soon after his successful application for enlistment, Private W O Mellor was presented with an inscribed wristlet watch at a ceremony in the institute drill room by Commander Weatherill on behalf of the naval corps.

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1. Letter, Lieut J Rogers RAN to Naval Cadet W Mellor, dated 8 Feb 1916

They referred to Private Mellor's long connection with the corps and congratulated him upon his decision to do his bit, an example he was sure every institute boy would follow if old enough.

As he was under 19 years of age, his parents were requested to give their consent too. His father, then a widower, signed the statement on 22 August 1917, "This consent is given strictly on the understanding the applicant will not leave Australia for the front until he attains the age of nineteen years." Bill Mellor's attestation paper showed his father at Oaklands, Riverview Terrace, Toowong as next-of-kin.

He was given regimental number 50665 and allotted to 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion. In his reserve unit before departure from Brisbane William Mellor served as temporary corporal from 30 January to 12 February 1918, travelled by train in early May to Liverpool, New South Wales and embarked from Sydney on the ship HMAT<sup>1</sup> *Osterley* on 8 May. For the voyage only, Bill Mellor served as sergeant and arrived at Liverpool England on 10 July 1918. While posted at 9<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion at Fovant, he reverted to the rank of private and spent time in hospital on two occasions at Hurdcott in England.

In October 1918 he was given an assignment in France where he was attached as an acting corporal to the Australian Infantry Base Depot at Rouelles. In 1919 Private William Mellor served in the Graves Registration Detachment till his return to Australia per the ship *Plassy*. He was discharged from the AIF on 17 July 1920.

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1. His Majesty's Australian Transport

William Mellor continued his military involvement after the war. During 1923 and 1924 he was a member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Light Horse Regiment Citizen Forces while residing on his property in the Nambour and Woombye district and attending military camps, parades and courses. At the beginning of 1925 he was appointed to the Australian Instructional Corps and was stationed at Toowoomba where he served as a warrant officer and later lieutenant.

At All Saints' Church of England, Clifton on 12 January 1929 Mr William O Mellor married Miss Ethel Elsie Grimes, the youngest daughter of Mr and Mrs C H Grimes of Clifton. Rev Padre Ramsay officiated. In the 1930s the couple lived at West Street, Toowoomba where William Mellor's occupation was drill instructor.

William Mellor tried fruit farming at Cleveland in the early 1940s. He and his wife lived at Island Street and William Mellor again took a keen interest in military activities. W O Mellor was made leader and instructor of the Voluntary Defence Corps in June 1940 but ill-health prevented him from continuing this work after 1944. A foundation member of his Cleveland platoon, he was held in high regard by all his men. A returned serviceman wrote, "Mr Mellor's devotion to duty even though he suffered ill-health was an example to the rest of the platoon. Mr Mellor often carried a parade to a successful dismissal even though all the time he was in acute pain. No wonder Cleveland platoon stuck through the trying months of organisation when they had such men to lead them."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Gnr Andrews B G (Ed), The Birth of the VDC, *On Target*, 1944

In the late 1940s, Mr and Mrs Mellor lived in William's old family home Oaklands at 22 Riverview Terrace, Toowong. They spent nearly three decades at their final address at 47 Orion Street, Coorparoo. William Mellor died on 6 April 1982, aged 83. His widow had reached the age of 91 when she died at Terranora, New South Wales on 21 December 1998.

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Brisbane  
July 2016





*Lest we forget*