

## Stories from the Honour Boards

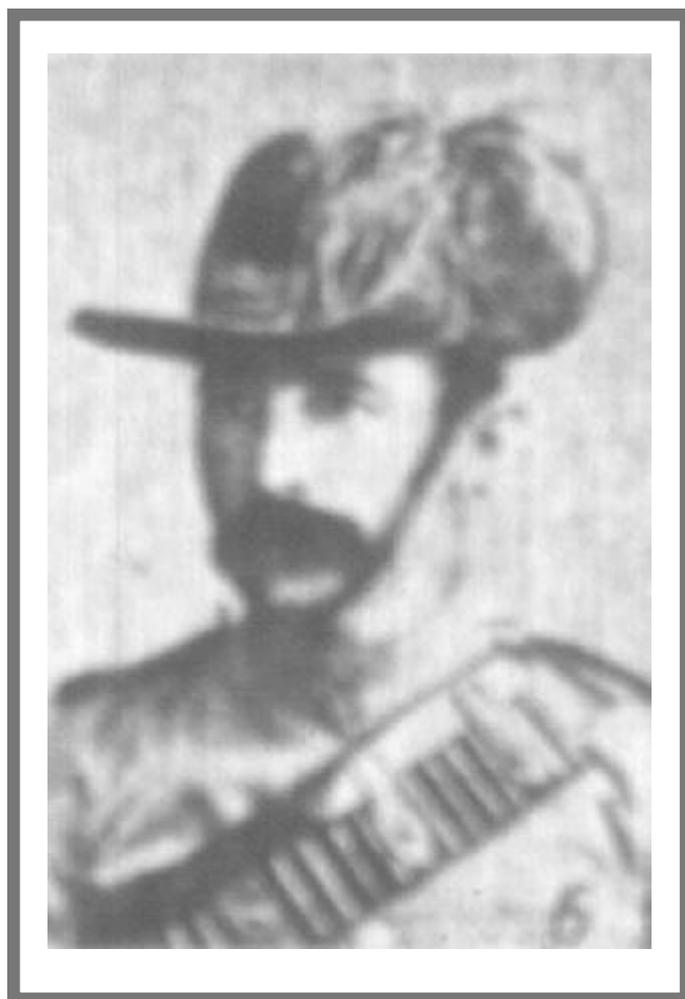
Stories of those who served and are remembered on the Honour Boards in the Merrington Anzac Memorial Peace Chapel at Saint Andrew's Uniting Church

Booklet Number 30

# **WILLIAM RANDOLPH**

# **EPPES SABINE**

## **1859-1924**



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## **Major (Hon) William Randolph Eppes Sabine**

William Randolph Eppes Sabine was born on 26 February 1859 at Moama, New South Wales, son of John Randolph Sabine (chemist) and Catherine (née Hardcastle). He became an accountant and financial manager. He married Annie Briggs in 1884 and their family consisted of four sons and a daughter.

Sergeant WRE Sabine served in the South African War, a member of 3<sup>rd</sup> Company, Queensland Mounted Infantry raised under proclamation in December 1900. The Contingent left Brisbane on 13 January 1900 and returned to Brisbane on 3 May 1901. He was engaged in operations in Orange Free State, Transvaal and Cape Colony. The *Brisbane Courier* published a letter he wrote to his wife from Osfontein on 7 March 1900: "I am writing this on the eve of a great battle. About 100 of our men are to be engaged in it and I am left in the camp with Lieutenant Crichton and a few others. All our men got away about 3 am. We can hear the guns quite distinctly and see the smoke from the cannons. We arrived at this place last night. We left Modder River on Sunday morning. It was raining hard and we had to cross the river twice. It is a sight out here. There are graves all over the place.

"Whenever the Boers move from one position to another they mark the distances by placing large biscuit tins at measured distances so they have no trouble in picking up the exact distances to range their guns on. We had a brush with the enemy yesterday and Hives was wounded in two places, one through the lip and the other through the arm and a bullet went through his trousers. It was a miracle he was not killed.

“The New South Wales men had nine wounded. Mr Harris and Sergeant Cooney have just come in. They got lost during the night and were pretty wild at missing the fight. I saw Major Browne last night and Lieutenant-Colonel Byron. They both look well. Major Browne inquired after all the “Courier” people.

“I had no sleep last night. We got here at 6 o’clock. I then had to go six miles to get a mule team and get rations. It was 10 when I got back. After that I had to take a party back to get tinned meat for the men that were going out at 3 am. Now I have an hour to spare and am writing. Pasco is laid up again; he has sprained his ankle; and Birberg has a broken wrist. The night before last we got no rations the transport was stuck up and they had to bring the things in on horses. I had a cup of tea today – the first since Sunday. A man’s rations here are three biscuits and ½lb meat per day but today we managed to get full rations.” He received the Queen’s Medal with four clasps.

Alderman WRE Sabine served on the South Brisbane Council in 1911.

Captain Sabine served again in World War 1 as Quartermaster, 1st Australian General Hospital<sup>1</sup> departing Brisbane aboard HMAT *Kyarra* on 21 November 1914. Just prior to his leaving he was entertained at Rowe’s Café by a number of his old comrades – commissioned officers of the Australian Imperial Force. In a toast to Captain Sabine, the Enoggera Camp Commandant said the Australian General Hospital was most fortunate in having as its quartermaster an officer with such wide experience as Captain Sabine.

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<sup>1</sup> Formed in Queensland, this large base hospital was located in various buildings in Cairo and it dealt with all war cases – physical injuries, diseases and shell shock.

After more than 12 months' service in Egypt and a few days' leave in Alexandria, WRE Sabine, now an honorary major, embarked from Alexandria to join the British Expeditionary Force in France but on the way at Marseilles he suffered a sudden attack of faintness while walking up a hill.



*AWM H18510. Heliopolis, Egypt. c. 1915. The interior of the Auxiliary Hospital where Major Sabine was a Quartermaster. It formed part of 1st Australian General Hospital (1AGH), located in the former Heliopolis Palace Hotel. The inmates were from Gallipoli.*

Attacks of considerable severity occurred over the following months. At Tidworth, England a medical officer recommended investigation by a medical board in Australia. He returned immediately on hospital ship *Kanowna* disembarking at Sydney on 31 October 1916.

Major Sabine was diagnosed by the medical board as suffering from aortic vascular disease with cardiac dilatation and he was unfit for further service at home and abroad. He was discharged on 4 December 1916.

Mr and Mrs Sabine were members of Wharf Street Congregational Church. As a South Brisbane Councillor he was active in civic affairs and he also held office in the local branch of the Returned Soldiers' Association. Failing health caused a lengthy period in Rosemount Hospital where he died 4 October 1924, aged 65 years.



*Heliopolis, Egypt. c. 1916. Elevated view of approximately fifteen tents in the grounds of Heliopolis Palace occupied by 1st Australian General Hospital (1AGH). The tents were erected all around the grounds as space inside the building became scarce. They are dwarfed by a multistorey building across the street from the gardens. Major Sabine served as a Quartermaster here.*

AWM P00037.020.

## **Select Bibliography**

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*The Queenslander*, 20 January 1900, 9 September 1916

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*The Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, 29 June 1943

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Books 1909 – 1920

Compiled by Noel E. Adsett, Brisbane, January 2015



*Lest we forget*