

# 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 204

## **SANDEMAN BROTHERS**

**JOHN**

**1892-1968**

**WILLIAM McWILLIAM**

**1898-1967**



This booklet remains the property of Saint Andrew's Uniting Church.  
Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.

**Cover Illustration:** *John Sandeman and his sons Jack (left) and Will, in early 1915. (Photo courtesy of the family)*

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Corner Ann and Creek Streets  
Brisbane QLD 4000  
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## **Corporal John Sandeman Sergeant William McWilliam Sandeman**



*Maroon War Memorial*

Forty-two men from the 35 families in the rural district of Maroon in south-east Queensland enlisted in the 1<sup>st</sup> AIF, and 17 of these men made the ultimate sacrifice – an unusually high proportion from the one community. The Maroon volunteers included the Sandeman brothers John (known as ‘Jack’) and Will, who served in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Australian Light Horse Regiments respectively, and they were among those who did return.

However, many of those who did return had been wounded or seriously ill - for Jack malarial fevers were a recurring challenge throughout the rest of his life. Despite this he married, raised a family and worked hard on the land (including with an unrewarding soldier settlement block 1919-1925), as a commission agent and auctioneer, and ran a petrol depot. During World War 2 he was a Lieutenant in the Citizen Military Forces.

Younger brother Will returned to his pre-war employment with Queensland Railways, also married and raised a family, and had various postings as a railway station master throughout Queensland. In World War 2 he served full-time as a Lieutenant in the Australian Army Pay Corps, including a period in New Guinea.

## Family background

Jack and Will were of Scottish descent, both of their parents having been born in Scotland - John McLean Sandeman (1859-1929) in Broughty Ferry, the son of a Robert Learmonth/Learmonth Sandeman (a gardener and farmer) and his wife Mary (née Bell); while Elizabeth Kerr McLelland (1858-1923) was born in Kirkcolm to Samuel (then a tailor, later a grocer) and his wife Margaret (née Kerr).



John and Elizabeth were married with Presbyterian rites in Brisbane in 1882. John was working as a mariner at that stage, and had met Elizabeth in 1881 when she was a passenger on a ship on which he was working.

*John and Elizabeth c1920 (Photo courtesy of the family)*

In 1887 part of a pastoral run named Maroon in southern Queensland, near the border with NSW, was divided into small agricultural lots and sold as 'excellent dairy farms'. It was very much pioneering for those who took up a block, with the settlers clearing scrub, erecting their slab huts with a shingle roof, growing their own vegetables, meat, maize and making their own bread, butter and cheese. By at least 1891 John and Elizabeth were on a block at Maroon and John was a member of the first committee for the Maroon School opened in 1891 – built on the initiative of the locals at their own expense.



*Maroon State School after an extension in 1907*

The couple had nine children, although not all lived to adulthood – sons Jack and Will were the only males who did so. John managed the local cheese factory for a time, and was among the first trustees of the 1905 School of Arts.

John and Elizabeth moved back to Brisbane sometime before 1919, and were communicant members of Saint Andrew's Church on the corner of Ann and Creek Streets in the Brisbane CBD.

### **Jack – enlistment and early service**

According to the Queensland births register, Jack was born in the Lady Bowen Hospital in Brisbane on 30 July 1892. After leaving the Maroon School at the age of 12 he worked on farms around Maroon, Rathdowney and Knapp's Creek - where he met the Roe family including Edith Mary Roe. Jack then took up droving, returning from that as soon as he had fulfilled an obligation, to enlist in Brisbane on 16 April 1915.



*Jack, prior to embarkation  
(Photo courtesy of the family)*

His religion was Presbyterian and the medical examination recorded that he stood 176cms tall, weighed 68.5kg, and had a fair complexion, grey eyes and fair hair.

Placed with the 9<sup>th</sup> reinforcements for the 5<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment, Jack embarked in Brisbane on the HMAT *Hymettus A1* on 17 September 1915, and for the purposes of the voyage was an acting Corporal. Before leaving he and Edith Roe became engaged and he carried her photograph with him throughout the War.



*Jack's photograph of Edith  
(Photo courtesy of the family)*



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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*Colour Patch  
of the  
5th Light Horse Regiment*

*Jack Sandeman in uniform  
(Courtesy of the family)*

Soon after arrival in Egypt John was hospitalised for appendicitis, and when he was formally taken on strength with the 5<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment at the end of the December in the large camp at Maadi, he reverted to the rank of Trooper. The Regiment marched out to Serapeum in late February 1916 to (uneventfully) occupy positions in the Suez Canal defences. During this time Jack was again hospitalised – this time with mumps – and he returned to duty a week later.

## Jack - the Sinai and Palestine

Defensive outposts were established to the east of the Canal and the 5<sup>th</sup> occupied the post at Duidar until August 1916, undertaking arduous night patrols and reconnaissances into the desert and keeping in touch with patrols from Romani. A large Turkish force unsuccessfully attacked the British and Dominion forces gathered at Romani in early August - the 5<sup>th</sup> took no part in this Battle, but was engaged in pursuit of the retreating Turkish Army and the unsuccessful attack on the strong Turkish positions in the Battle of Bir-el-Abd on 9 August 1916.



*Camels resting at a camp at Duidar*

Australian War Memorial A01985

After re-organising and recuperating back at the Duidar post in October and November 1916, the 5<sup>th</sup> protected communication lines and engaged in flank protection as the British and Dominion forces continued to follow and harass retreating Turkish forces until the strong defensive line the Turks held between Gaza and Beersheba was reached in March 1917.

In March and April of 1917 the 5<sup>th</sup> took part in two unsuccessful attacks on Gaza, with the frustration of the 5<sup>th</sup> making key inroads in attacking Gaza from the rear on the first occasion, but being ordered to withdraw.

Gaza finally fell in November. Jack suffered an injury to his right hand shortly before this when the 5<sup>th</sup> cleared deep wells blown up by the Turks at Asluj and were searching for enemy forces nearby.



*A view of the well area  
near Asluj, 1917*

*Australian War Memorial H02626*

When digging a trench in stony ground on the night of the 26/27<sup>th</sup> October 1917 Jack was troubled by severe jarring – later diagnosed as inflammation of the connective tissue – although he initially stayed with the Regiment on light duties, seeking medical help only when it was clear that the condition was not improving. In December 1917 he was admitted to hospital, although in addition to the hand injury there is some reference in his service papers to appendix pain.

After a period of convalescence Jack re-joined the 5<sup>th</sup> in May 1918, when it was in positions on the western side of the Jordan River. The Jordan Valley was notorious for mosquitos and malaria and a substantial number of Light Horsemen were struck down - Jack contracted the disease in July, and after repatriation to Australia on the HMAT *Wiltshire* A18, was formally discharged on 19 February 1919.

### **Jack post-war**

Jack relished being on the land and working with horses and cattle, and balloted in 1919 in the soldier settlement scheme, being allocated a block of land at Mt Hutton (close to Injune).

After building a house on this block he and Edith were married at Knapp's Creek on 4 November 1920, with Methodist rites. However, like many others who took part in the soldier settlement scheme, and despite Jack having a background on the land, drought and other circumstances forced him to walk off the Injune property, in February 1925.

He then took up a dairy farm at Tabooba south of Beaudesert, where his family expanded to a total of four children (daughters May, Joan and Jessie and son Gordon). A severe recurrence of his malaria in late 1927 necessitated repatriation assistance and some periods in hospital - it took 12 months for him to recover.

Jack sold the Tabooba farm in 1929 and moved his family to Aratula (south-west of Fassifern) where he trimmed logs to build saleyards and operated as a commission agent and auctioneer. He also had a petrol depot, selling 24 gallon (about 100 litres) and 44 gallon (200l) drums of fuel as well as kerosene and oils. In addition, Jack contributed to the region as a Boonah Shire Councillor from 1936-39.

In March 1939 the family moved to a dairying and grazing property at Cooyar (90 kms north of Toowoomba). The land was very hilly and steep in places, with three spring-fed creeks down low, and Gordon, Joan and Jessie did a good deal of the dairying. During the Second World War Jack served in the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Citizen Military Forces from May 1942 to October 1945, at the rank of Lieutenant from September 1944.

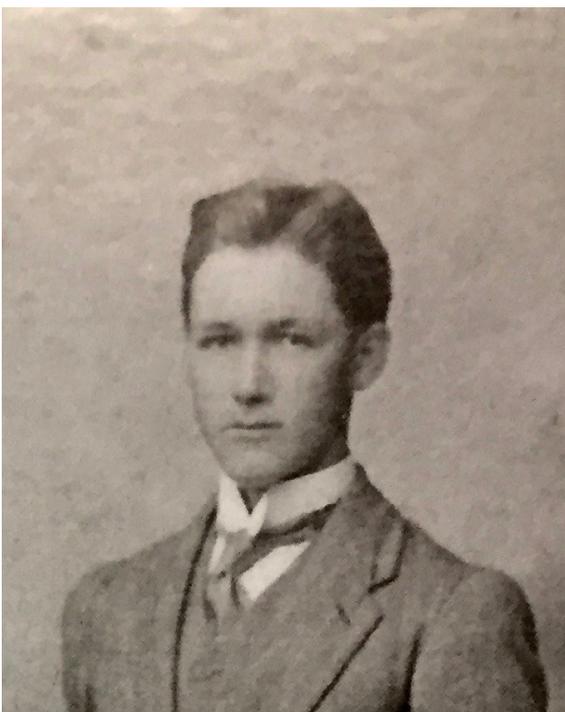
With the help of a cousin, Jack built a small house for his and Edith's retirement at Beachmere north of Brisbane, with eight acres of land so he could still feel 'country'. They moved to Beachmere in late 1951, but not long afterwards Jack's health declined noticeably, particularly from emphysema, and he was cared for by Edith for an extended period.

Jack died on 30 May 1968 at the Freemasons Home, Sandgate, aged 75. Edith had passed away 10 weeks earlier. They were survived by Gordon, Joan and Jessie (daughter May had passed away two years earlier). Jack's funeral was conducted in the Presbyterian Church in King Street, Caboolture, and his remains were interred in the Caboolture Cemetery, beside those of Edith.



### **Will – enlistment**

William McWilliam Sandeman (known as 'Will') was born in Ipswich on 21 September 1898. After attending the Maroon School, he started work as a porter with the Queensland Railways when he was 16, and enlisted in the 1<sup>st</sup> AIF on 19 January 1917 when he was 18 (the minimum required age).



As he was under 21 parental consent was required – and this was forthcoming but with the interesting qualification that Will was not to be sent overseas until his 19th birthday.

*Will in early 1915, aged 16  
(Photo courtesy of the family)*

This was an unusual qualification, and perhaps a compromise between parental concern about both their surviving sons being at risk (and knowing how many of the other Maroon men had died) as against Will's keenness to serve in the 1<sup>st</sup> AIF.

Will had had four years with the senior militia cadets, and on enlistment stood 175cms tall, weighed 63.5kg, and had a fair complexion, light brown hair and grey eyes. His religion was Presbyterian.

The condition set by his parents was honoured, and Will trained as a Private in the reserve unit until he turned 19 in September 1917 – then three days later he was placed as a Trooper in the 20<sup>th</sup> reinforcements for the 11<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment. Shortly before embarking on the HMAT *Ulysses* A38 on 19 December 1917 in Sydney Will was made a Corporal, and a few days after sailing a temporary (albeit unpaid) Sergeant.

### **Will - service in the Middle East**

The reinforcements disembarked in Egypt in mid-January 1918, and in February Will went to the Imperial School of Instruction in Moascar (still as a Sergeant but unpaid), passed the NCOs course at Zeitoun in April, and then attended the Central Gas School in Raja in May - after which he did receive extra duty pay as a Sergeant in the Central Training Depot. In July the thoroughly trained William was made a Sergeant at the instructional staff HQ.

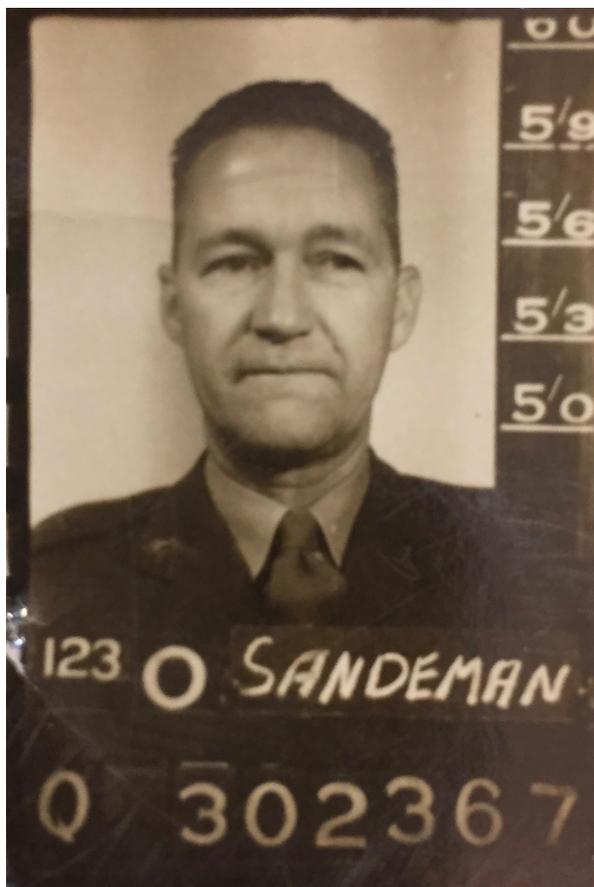
After the Turks surrendered on 30 October 1918, Will applied for an early return home due to the ill health of his parents. He boarded the *SS Dorset* at the end of April 1919 and after arriving back in Australia in June, was formally discharged on 5 July 1919.

## **Will - post-war**

Will returned to his employment with the Queensland railways, living initially at New Farm and then Coorparoo, and was on the communion roll of Saint Andrew's in the Brisbane CBD (as were his parents). Relief postings saw him work in several locations.

In 1924 Will was stationed at Goodwood (half way between Maryborough and Bundaberg), and in October of that year he married Sarah Eliza Keeble in St Peter's Church of England, Wynnum. Sarah had been born in Eidsvold in 1900, the youngest daughter of Arthur Keeble and Dinah Priscella (née Buckingham).

Postings for Will to Beerburrum and Toowoomba followed, with a break in his railway employment during the Second World War when he served full-time from July 1940 to June 1946 in the Australian Army Pay Corps – at the rank of Lieutenant from October 1943 – with some of this service being in New Guinea.



*Will Sandeman  
Second World War Serviceman*

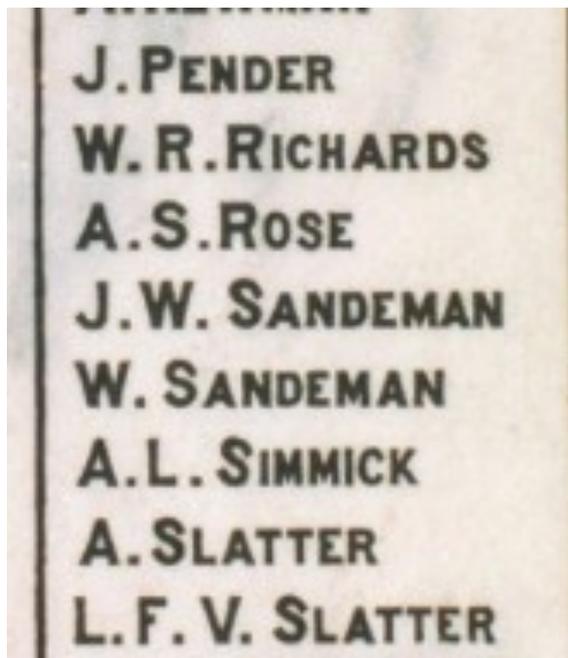
After a posting to Blackwater, by 1949 Will was back in Brisbane, with he and Sarah residing in Rosling Street, Moorooka. At the time of his retirement in December 1964 Will was the Assistant Station Master at the South Brisbane Station (as both a local terminus and the terminus with goods sheds and shunting yards for Interstate trains it was large and very busy).



*South Brisbane Station*

Will didn't get to enjoy his retirement for very long – he passed away on 7 October 1967 in the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane, aged 69, and his remains were cremated at the Mt Thompson Memorial Gardens with Presbyterian rites. He was survived by Sarah, a son Glen and one daughter Beverley.

In commemoration of their service in World War 1, Will and his brother Jack are listed on the Honour Boards in Saint Andrew's Church in the Brisbane CBD, and the War Memorial at their home town of Maroon.



*War Memorial, Maroon (detail)*



*Mount Thompson Memorial Gardens  
Mount Gravatt*

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The assistance of John's daughter Jessie is gratefully acknowledged.

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Buderim

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*Lest we forget*