

# 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 149

## **SAWERS BROTHERS**

### **ALEXANDER STUART**

**1884 - 1962**

### **STUART HOUSTON**

**1887 - 1978**



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

**Cover Illustration:**

*The Victory Medal was authorised in 1919 to commemorate the victory of the Allied Forces over the Central Powers.*

*The Sawers brothers both received the Victory Medal*



*The Victory Medal  
The reverse*

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Corner Ann and Creek Streets  
Brisbane QLD 4000  
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## Sawers Family

Thomas Sawers, a locomotive fireman was born on 31 December 1851 in Barrhead, Renfrewshire in Scotland and Stuart Houston, his wife, about 1850 in Glasgow. They were married in Dennistoun, Glasgow on 4 June 1875 and lived at Hutchesontown, Glasgow

There were five children, three born in Glasgow: John in 1876, Thomas in 1878 and Agnes Bell in 1880. Alexander Stuart was born in Ipswich in 1884 (his twin James Glynn, died as a baby) and Stuart Houston was born on 4 August 1887 in Jessie Street, Petrie Terrace.

The family of Thomas, Stuart and their three children John (7), Thomas (5) and Agnes (2) arrived in Brisbane on 3 October 1883 on the 1210 ton *Southesk* with around 390 others after a voyage of three and a half months.



*The Southesk was built in Dundee in 1877*

State Library of South Australia. PRG1373/10/4

Alexander and Stuart both enlisted in the Great War

Their parents were on the Communion Rolls of Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church in 1905, 1908, 1912, 1921 and 1923. The Rolls are not available for later years. Stuart Houston was on the Rolls for 1921 and 1923.

## Alexander Stuart Sawers

Alexander, the fourth child of Thomas and Stuart Sawers was born in Ipswich, Queensland on 16 April 1884. He enlisted on 9 October 1915 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Remount Unit. His Attestation papers showed that he had blue eyes, fresh complexion and fair hair. As his brother would later do he gave as next of kin his mother living at the time in Wilson Street Paddington, and crossed out the sentence about giving part of his pay to his wife and any children.



HMAT Orontes

(State Library of Victoria)

His height was 5 ft 5ins (165cm) and weight 9st 9lbs (61kg). He had served three years in the Field Artillery and his occupation was labourer. Alexander sailed from Sydney on board the *Orontes* on 10 November 2015.

He was admitted to hospital at Suez on 23 December, discharged on 16 March and transferred to Maadi, rejoining his unit. He was with his Unit and marched into the camp at Moascar, Egypt on 10 October. On 17 October he was declared unfit and discharged to Australia per the *Vestalia*.

He married Dorothy Duckham on 6 November 1918. In 1925 they lived at Miriam Vale where his occupation was Dairy Assistant. Over the ensuing years they lived at Colosseum, Jambin and Goovigen always working in the dairy industry. He was living in Biloela in 1958. He died on 28 July 1962, and Dorothy died in 1966.



*Stuart (née Houston) Sawers  
The mother of Alexander and Stuart*

*(Photo courtesy of the family)*



*Thomas Sawers*  
*The father of Alexander and Stuart*  
*(Photo courtesy of the family)*

## Private Stuart Houston Sawers

When he enlisted on 3 January 1916 his occupation was given as warehouseman, he was 158cm tall and weighed 54kgs. He had a dark complexion, brown eyes and dark hair. His religious denomination was Presbyterian. The item about pay to wife and children was deleted as he was at that time unmarried.

Stuart was promoted to provisional corporal from 10 July 1916 and reverted to the ranks on 10 January 1917. The Honour Board at Saint Andrew's incorrectly uses the spelling 'Stewart' and gives his rank as Corporal. He embarked on the *Marathon* on 27 October 1916 as part of the Army Medical Reinforcements to



*Stuart Sawers (Photo courtesy of the family),*<sub>7</sub>

which he was attached from August 1916 to November 1918. On that first day, he recorded in his diary 'We put out from the wharf at 6pm but anchored in the bay for the night.'

They called in to Fremantle, Durban, Cape Town and Sierra Leone and after 75 days at sea disembarked at Plymouth and marched in to AAMC training depot at Parkhurst in Shipton Bellinger.

On 10 January 1917 he reverted to Private. During this time he was admitted to Delhi Hospital with bronchitis from 21 February to 19 March 1917, but on 16 June sailed to France from Folkestone. On 1 October he was again admitted to hospital – sick, but on 6 October rejoined his Unit.



*Delhi Hospital,  
Salisbury Plain, England*

State Library of Victoria. H85.55/160/42

He spent from 9 March to 23 March, 1918 on leave in England, travelling to and enjoying Edinburgh and Glasgow.

He wrote in his diary of his time on the western front – the weather from cold windy and wet to fine sunny days, German bombing, billets of varying quality, and of his attendance at church. He records his prayers for guidance and safety, and his playing organs and pianos from time to time. On 27 October 1918, the second anniversary of his leaving home he writes ‘Have asked the Lord for guidance throughout my exile from home...’

He noted that on 11 November ‘The Germans signed the Armistice and hostilities were stopped from 11 am In our village the bands turned out and the houses put out flags.’

On 6 November 1918 he was transferred from 26th Battalion to 7<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance.

Chaplain Colonel Merrington touches his life when on 24 January 1919, Stuart's 819<sup>th</sup> day, 'went into the city, Charleroi, and heard Dr Merrington give a lecture on Gallipoli ...there was present a good number.'

Stuart was the recipient, along with all serving Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and men, of a letter dated 14 November from General Birdwood referring to 'the magnificent work done by Australian soldiers during four long years' and referring to the time of demobilization 'play the game boys...as you always have, and add still more to the deep debt of gratitude which will always be acknowledged to you by the Empire and remembered by me as your comrade and commander.'

To the  
**Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers,  
and Men**  
of the Australian Imperial Force.

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It is now just four years that we have been serving together, often through days of hardship and peril, and often through times of well-deserved success.

During this time I hope and think we have come to know each other well, and I trust have realised how rightly we have confidence in each other.

No words of mine can possibly express all I feel for the magnificent work which has been done by the Australian soldier during these long four years. It is well known and recognised, not only throughout the British Empire, but throughout the world—and now we have peace in sight, and peace after a victory in which the Australian soldier has taken so large a share.

Even then, with peace there are still difficult times before us. Faith in our recent foe cannot quickly be established, and it may be that for some little time yet we shall be able to relax no precautions, until we are assured of the complete and honest fulfilment of our terms.

Then will come the difficult time of demobilisation, and it is regarding this that I wish to make

a personal appeal to every single member of the A.I.F. in the full confidence that it will be met as every other appeal to face and tackle the strongest positions has ever been met by the Australian soldier. Never has the name of Australia stood higher than it does now throughout the world, thanks to the bravery of her soldiers, and it is up to every one of us to see that this is maintained, and that no reproach can be cast on the Australian Flag owing to any behaviour of ours.

The time of demobilisation will undoubtedly be difficult and irksome—I fully realise what great personal self-restraint will certainly be required—but if each individual of us makes up his mind to do his best during these times, realising the good name we bear, I feel confident that all will go off well.

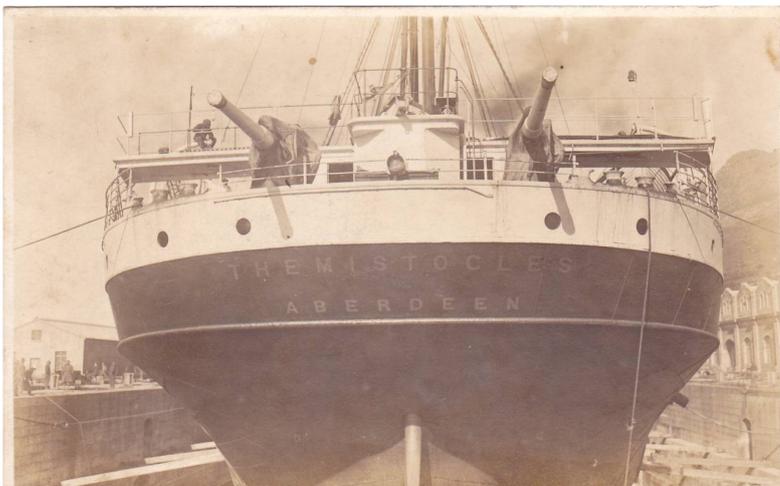
I want you to remember that everything possible will be done to look after and help the troops during this period, while every energy will be strained to get men back to their homes as soon as this possibly can be done. You will have to realise, however, that there is a great shortage of shipping, and that there must be a considerable inevitable delay.

Play the game, boys, during this time, as you have always done, and add still more to the deep debt of gratitude which will always be acknowledged to you by the Empire and remembered by me as your comrade and commander.

In the Field,  
14th November 1918.

*W. Birdwood*

On 12 June 1919 he returned to Australia on the *Themistocles*, again being admitted to hospital with pain in the lumbar region. On the night of 3 July at 11.45pm the *Themistocles* while steaming off the coast near Cape Town collided with a sailing ship loaded with coal en route from Durban to Buenos Aires. The *Edderside* sank within three minutes with the loss of seven lives among its crew of 20. *Themistocles* was dry docked in Cape Town for three weeks while repairs were completed and the troops were billeted.



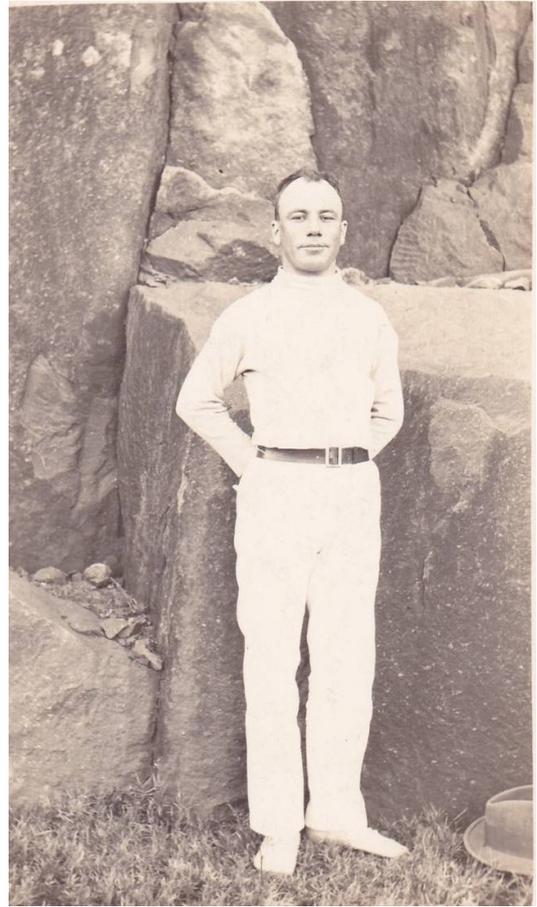
*Themistocles*

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Stuart became very friendly with a Cape Town family who at the outbreak of World War 2 contacted him through a notice in the *Brisbane Courier*.

Stuart married Florence Grace Hyde on 21 August 1920 in Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church with Dr Merrington officiating and they lived at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Kedron. At that time he was a salesman. Fourth Avenue's name was changed to Arnott Street and they lived there all their married life. Stuart moved to the Freemason's Home at Sandgate for the last years of his life. Stuart's Death Certificate shows that they had two children Mavis Houston born about 1921, and Joan Stuart born about 1925.

Stuart was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.



*Undated photographs of Stuart Sawers.*

*Photos courtesy of the family)*

Florence died in 1973 and  
Stuart on 17 August 1978.

### Reference List

Archives.com.au  
Ancestry online  
Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour  
Queensland Electoral Roll  
Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Queensland



The assistance of Stuart's grandson Peter is gratefully acknowledged.

Compiled by Bob Warrick  
Brisbane, November 2016. Revised February 2018



*Lest we forget*