



## Lieutenant Colonel C.F. PLANT VD

[1843 – 1932]

### RESEARCH HAS NOT UNCOVERED A PHOTOGRAPH OF COLONEL PLANT

#### Colonel Plant was elected to Life Membership of the Club – possibly 1910 and before 1928

Charles Frederic Plant born 26 January 1843 at Nottingham, England.

He came to Australia as a young man, in company with his brother, E.H.T. Plant. They travelled to the Palmer River goldfields and other parts of North Queensland in the pursuit of gold and other precious metals. By 1882, Charles was the managing director of a mine at Kingsborough (NW of Mareeba) and a wealthy man. He was a prominent and highly respected citizen of Charters Towers, and he engaged in many social and administrative activities - he was for instance, the president of the Philosophical Society in the town. The house that was built for him in 1890/91 was said to be "the most magnificent in Queensland".

He married in 1884 in Ravenswood to Isabel Marion (née Pegasus) [1850-1929] from Launceston, Tasmania. Her father had been a Captain in the Royal Marines, and her grandfather a Captain in the Connaught Rangers. They had five children:

- Reginald Arthur Neville [1884-1937] Born in Cairns. A Land Agent who saw active service in First World War with 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Light Horse. Unmarried. Captain R.A.N. Plant VRD was elected to Life Membership of the Club in 1937.
- Hilda Florence Neville [1886-1943] Born in Charters Towers. Married John MacDonald Grant <sup>1</sup> in 1922. Died in Brisbane.

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<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant Colonel John MacDonald Grant MC, VD [1883-1977] 1913-1938 Engineer and Signals Officer AIF and Citizen Forces; 1938-41 Commanding Officer 61 Bn, Retired 1941 Honorary rank of Colonel.

*We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.*

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- Harold Frederick Hood [1888-1916] Born in Charters Towers. Unmarried. A medical practitioner. Captain Plant was killed in action in Pozieres, France serving as Regimental Medical Officer, 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion.
- Eric Clive Pegus [1890-1950] Born in Charters Towers. Married Oona Hunter (née Brown) and had two children. Major General Eric Plant CB, DSO\*, OBE, CdeG served as an infantry officer in First World War, and then in senior staff and instructional postings until retiring in 1949. He died in Sydney.  
  
Eric Plant was a Club member and served on the Committee 1933, 1935 and as Vice-President in 1934.
- Oenone Elfrida Maud [1892-1928] Born in Charters Towers. Married John Ferndale Finlay, a master mariner, in 1919 and died in Brisbane.

1891 was the year of the big shearers strike, with tensions high throughout inland Queensland and New South Wales. Troops were sent to towns and properties in wool-growing areas to prevent the real possibility of a civil war. Charles Plant volunteered for military duty in April 1891, and his company was immediately sent by train to Hughenden, and then onto Cambridge Downs (north of Richmond): "They left Hughenden about 1st May to escort the first batch of free labourers, introduced by Mr Kilgour, to Cambridge Downs. The men ... had a rough time in returning, as they were stuck up on the banks of the Flinders by the flooded state of the river, and were short of rations for some days." Plant spent some of his spare time collecting botanical specimens for the Government Botanist.

Plant purchased *Woodlands*, 24 Woodland Street, Ashgrove, Brisbane in 1889 for the benefit of his children's education and used the large property to stay at when in Brisbane until he retired there in 1897/8. About this time, he erected a grand house for himself, adjacent to *Woodlands*, which he named *Ferndale* and erected a decorative wrought iron fence along Woodland Street that enclosed both houses.

In 1922 the land was subdivided in anticipation of the marriage of Plant's elder daughter, Hilda. The *Woodlands* house and land were placed in the name of her fiancé, John MacDonald Grant, who had been in military service at Gallipoli and in France with Hilda's brothers Eric and Reg.

Also, in 1922, Plant made a similar provision for his other daughter, Oenone, transferring land between *Woodlands* and *Ferndale* to her future husband, John Finlay. This land was not built on and was used until the 1950s as an extension to the garden of the Grants' home, which was called *Glen Urquhart*.

In 1936 the land on which *Ferndale* stood was subdivided and the house was demolished. It had featured handsome carved cedar joinery and a ballroom surmounted by a lantern decorated with leadlight panels which were then incorporated into *Woodlands*.

Hilda Grant died in 1943 after prolonged ill health. She had been deeply involved with the Australian Red Cross in both World Wars, President of the Ashgrove Branch in World War II and Convenor of the Ithaca Branch of the Australian Comforts Fund. She was also Commissioner for Girl Guides in the 1930s.

John Grant lived until the age of 94, dying in 1977. Although he was trained as an engineer, becoming Chief Assistant Engineer for Brisbane Tramways, he retained his military associations after World War I. In 1938 he was appointed to command and raise the 61st Battalion (Queensland Cameron Highlanders), which he did with notable success. They were later to play a significant role in the Battle of Milne Bay in 1942. Grant was also inaugural president of the Ashgrove RSL. During his presidency between 1932–35, committee meetings were held at his home. Woodland Street remains the official Ashgrove marshalling area on Anzac Day, a reminder of Grant's early role in organising Anzac Day observances in the area.

Plant was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Queensland Defence Force in December 1891. He was promoted Captain in May 1892, and Major in July 1897. He retired in October 1902 with the Honorary rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

Colonel Plant died in Brisbane on 7 December 1932 and was buried at Toowong Cemetery.

Sources included:

- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports, and sundry documents
- Bean, A.R. (Tony) 2014 'Biographical notes on C.F. Plant (1843-1932)', *Australasian Systematic Botany Society Newsletter* 160 (September 2014),
- Who's Who in Australia, 1950
- NAA and AWM Archives