



## Colonel D E EVANS DSO OBE VD

(1885 – 1951)



**Colonel Evans was elected to Life Membership of the Club – possibly after 1918 and before 1928.**

Served with Corps of Australian Engineers, World War 1. Commander 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade 7 May 1930-31 Jul 1930. A founder of the engineering firm of Evans Deakin Ltd,

Daniel Edward Evans was born on 8 May 1885, at Geelong, Victoria - fifth son of Charles Herbert Evans, described as a mariner, and his wife Jean, née Millard. A jack of all trades, Charles Evans was a foreman on the building of both the Princes Bridge, Melbourne, and of Mort's Dock, Sydney. When Charles went to Bundaberg, Queensland, to manage a dredge, Daniel attended the Bundaberg Boys' Central School, which he left at 14 to become an engineer-apprentice at the Bundaberg Foundry.

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The family moved to Adelaide where Daniel became a draughtsman for the Outer Harbour Construction Co. but soon shipped as an engineer on the cable-ship *Restorer* and he spent his nineteenth birthday on her in Singapore. Promoted to second engineer when the ship was transferred to an American company, he studied for his chief engineer's certificate and gained a second-class Board of Trade certificate at 21. He then returned to Adelaide and gained his chief engineer's certificate in 1908 while working for the Adelaide Steam Ship Co.

Evans had called frequently at Brisbane and saw a need for an enterprising firm of engineers there. In 1910 he and the 23-year-old Arthur Deakin opened a small business in Edward Street as suppliers of engineering equipment. They acquired their first workshop in 1913.

In December 1912 Evans was commissioned as second lieutenant in the Australian Military Forces (militia). He joined the Australian Imperial Force as a lieutenant in the 2nd Divisional Engineers in July 1915 and served in Egypt and France. By the time his active service was terminated by wounds in February 1918 he was a major, had been mentioned in dispatches and awarded the Distinguished Service Order in the New Year honours of 1917. Contacts made while on leave in England later secured his appointment as a non-exclusive surveyor in Brisbane for Lloyds. He also joined the Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders in Scotland.

In 1924 Evans became lieutenant-colonel commanding the 5th Division, Australian Engineers, and in 1930 colonel commanding the 11th Infantry Brigade. He was awarded the Volunteer Officers' Decoration (VD) in 1931 and in 1936 was placed on the unattached list.

The business, carried on during the war by Deakin, had prospered, although the workshop had been lost. Evans started a new workshop making small pieces of equipment in an outbuilding of his Coorparoo home in 1919. He pioneered the introduction in Queensland of both oxy-acetylene and electric arc welding. A larger establishment was bought in 1922. One of their first contracts was for 300 wagons for the Queensland Government Railways. A new large workshop built at Rocklea for structural steel and railway-engine repairs in 1926 was ready to manufacture the steel work for the Story Bridge in 1933. Joining (Sir) Manuel Hornibrook, he chaired a new construction company which erected the bridge.

Evans was in uniform again at the outbreak of World War II as chief engineer, Northern Command. He was also appointed chairman of the Board of Area Management, Queensland, under the Ministry of Munitions; for this work he was awarded an OBE in 1951.

The Evans Deakin shipyard at Kangaroo Point was established in late 1939. A 1200-ton lighter commenced on 27 July 1940 was the first of seventeen naval and merchant ships built in wartime. The last of eighty-one ships built in the yards was launched in 1971. Evans personally supervised much of the work and served also as a director for Mt Isa Mines Ltd, Cossey Motors (Pty) Ltd and Tableland Tin Dredging (NL). Energetic, forceful and gregarious, he liked whisky and frequented the United Service and the Johnsonian clubs. An old trade unionist, he was apolitical, joined the Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers, looked after the welfare of his men and had little industrial trouble.

A member of the first council of the Institution of Engineers, Australia, in 1921, Evans was one of the first members of the Professional Engineers Registration Board, and also belonged to the Institution of Naval Architects, London, and the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. He was on the board of the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Queensland from 1921 till his death; he left a substantial bequest to the university, and is commemorated by an annual memorial lecture.

Evans retired in 1948, died of cancer in Brisbane on 1 December 1951, and was buried in Nudgee cemetery with Anglican rites. His wife Kathleen Mary, whom he had married in Sydney on 4 November 1908, was the daughter of the Kimberley pioneer Michael (Stumpy) Durack. They had one son and four daughters. His estate, valued for probate at £183,158, was left principally to his family. Other bequests included a memorial to the Royal Australian Navy and the Merchant Navy, funds for Legacy, the Red Cross and the Spastic Children's Welfare League, an engineering bursary in memory of his old Bundaberg foreman, William Parry, and funds to commemorate himself in the University Faculty of Engineering and at Evans Deakin Ltd.

Evans was a member of the Metropolitan-Caloundra Surf Life Saving Club and was elected a Life Member of that club in 1949.

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
- Australian Dictionary of Biography