



Lieutenant Colonel L. A. LITTLE MBE ED

[1903 – 1974]



Colonel Little was elected to Life Membership of the Club in 1947

Colonel Little was President of the club from 1945 - 46

Colonel Little was a Trustee of the Club from 1958 to 1974

Leonard Andrew Little was born in Melbourne on 14 January 1903 the third son of Andrew and Mary Cecilia (nee Lloyd).

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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Little completed his secondary education at Caulfield Grammar School in Melbourne, which he entered in 1916 with a King Edward VII Scholarship, and matriculated to the University of Melbourne on 1 December 1922. He graduated in medicine in December 1927 and moved to Brisbane in 1928 as a resident medical officer at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, where he was later senior honorary surgeon (1938-1956) and subsequently a senior consulting surgeon.

On 5 September 1931, Dr Little married Alfreda Eleanor Grace (née Colhoun) at St John's Church of England East Malvern, Melbourne. In Brisbane they had two sons:

- Leonard Colhoun (b. 1933) Leonard became an academic in business / economics and consulted extensively in management psychology. He also became a Captain in the CMF in the Psychology Corps in Brisbane in 1965, and joined the Club in 1966.
- Douglas Andrew (b. 1938) Douglas became a veterinarian and spent his career in livestock production research. He joined the Club in 1976.

Dr Little led early research in "Q" Fever in Queensland ¹. He was the first to recognize that a severe illness, the course of which was clinically distinct from other diseases such as typhoid fever, was occurring only in patients who worked at the local abattoir. The syndrome was dubbed 'Abattoir Fever'. The appearance of this diagnosis on medical certificates led the meatworkers' union representative to seek an explanation from Dr Derrick of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research, who in turn contacted Dr Little for clarification. The then unknown cause of this disease led to its being re-named 'Q' (for Query) Fever. From relevant blood samples sent to medical researcher Sir Macfarlane Burnett in Victoria, he isolated a hitherto unknown bacterium, initially called *Rickettsia burnetti*, (subsequently *Coxiella burnetii*) identified as the cause of Q Fever. The disease has remained so-named and identified as of worldwide occurrence.

Dr Little was very active in the medical fraternity throughout his life. He joined the British Medical Association in 1929 and remained a member of the British Medical Association / Australian Medical Association. He was awarded a Fellowship of the Australian Medical Association in 1969, having served on the Queensland Branch Council from 1956 to 1967, as President 1957-1958 and Chairman of Council 1959-1967. He was actively associated with several committees of Council and played a prominent part in the acquisition of the headquarters of the Queensland Branch on L'Estrange Terrace, Kelvin Grove.

He represented the Queensland Branch on the National Safety Council of Australia and the Medical Assessment Tribunal. From 1963 for some years he was Chairman of Directors, Australian Medical Agency of Queensland and of the Queensland Medical Finance Company Pty. Ltd. in addition to serving on the Queensland State Executive of the Medical Benefits Company of Australia and as Chairman of the South Brisbane Hospitals Board for many years.

He was awarded a Fellowship of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners in recognition of his many years of practice as physician and surgeon, and service as Provost and Board Member of the Queensland Faculty of the College.

All of these achievements culminated in his being awarded an MBE in the 1973 New Year's Honours for "services to the Medical Association in Queensland".

While at university, Little had joined the Melbourne University Rifles (having been in the Senior Cadets at school for four years) and was commissioned as a Lieutenant on 1 July 1924 – then in

¹ A bacterial infection caused by the bacteria *Coxiella burnetii* - most commonly found in cattle, sheep, and goats. Humans typically get Q fever when they breathe in dust that was contaminated by infected animal.

1930 transferred to AAMC as a Captain. He was on the establishment of 7 Field Ambulance and 11 Heavy Battery. In 1937 he was promoted Major and allotted to 11 Field Ambulance.

In January 1941 he was called up for Full Time Duty and taken on strength of 7 Field Ambulance at Enoggera, and was promoted Temporary Lieutenant Colonel to command the unit in March 1941. He relinquished the command in November 1942 after a severe renal infection caused him to be assessed as medically unfit for further active service, and was placed on the Retired List in March 1943.

He was awarded the Efficiency Decoration in 1966 for his service as an officer in peace and war.

The then Captain Little joined the Club 23 March 1935; and was universally known as “Lal” (from his initials). He served on the Club Committee 1939-41 and 1943-67. The break in service was due to his service with 2nd AIF. His time as President was marked by the purchase of the new club premises at 183 Wickham Terrace and the large influx of members returning from war service. He was elected to Life Membership in 1947.

During the 1960’s and until his death in 1974, Dr Little maintained his consulting rooms at the Club – in the area currently the Military Bar, which has an external door near the Green House.



This cartoon of the Club Committee 1946-47 depicts President Little top, second from left.

The Littles lived at Morningside for most of their lives and retired to Mt Glorious where “Lal” died on 20 October 1974. His wife of 43 years had died shortly before him on 28 September 1974.

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
- Contributions from Dr Douglas Little (son) May 2020
- Trove
- National Archives