



Colonel F. A. HUGHES DSO, VD, ADC

[1874 - 1951]



Colonel Hughes was elected to Life Membership of the Club in 1937.

Colonel was President of the Club in 1920 and 1931.

Colonel Hughes was a Trustee of the Club from 1928 to 1951

Francis Augustus Hughes was born on 9 March 1874 in Brisbane, son of Alfred Hughes, grocer, and his wife Margaret, née Rock, both Sydney-born. He was educated at St Joseph's College, Brisbane, and was dux in his final year. Gus Hughes then joined the Castlemaine Brewery and Quinlan Gray & Co. Brisbane Ltd, eventually becoming an accountant. As a young man he was active in sculling and lacrosse.

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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By 1907 Hughes was convinced of the need for citizens to take an active part in defence. He joined the Australian Field Artillery, Australian Military Forces, was commissioned Second Lieutenant on 1 October 1907, and advanced to Major in six years. In 1911-12 he was militia adjutant for eighteen months and commanded the 2nd Battery, 1st A.F.A., from February to August 1914. On 20 August he joined the Australian Imperial Force and, as Major commanding the 7th Battery, 3rd Field Artillery Brigade, sailed for Egypt on 25 September. After intensive training there, the battery embarked for Gallipoli.

Going ashore on the day after the landing, the 7th Battery was the first artillery moved forward to support the infantry who had been hard pressed for nearly thirty-six hours. The terrain was steeply broken and suitable positions for firing over the ridges could not be found. Under Hughes's direction three guns were dragged up the slopes to Bolton's Hill and were roughly dug in immediately behind the infantry forward positions. When the enemy attacked after dark the shrapnel from one gun was timed to burst just clear of the gun muzzle, the field-piece thus acting as a gigantic shotgun. Charles Bean recorded that 'it was a weapon which the Turks could not face, and the attack collapsed'. The fourth gun was brought into action next day and that night all guns repeated the point-blank defensive fire. On 5 May enemy artillery shelled Bolton's Hill and two of Hughes's guns, though entirely exposed, were turned against the hidden gun-line and continued firing until the shelling ceased. Similar enemy attacks were launched at intervals against sites now better prepared. All were repulsed. Apart from brief rest periods, the battery remained in action until the evacuation in December and except for a month in hospital Hughes continued in command.

When the 4th Division was formed in Egypt in March 1916 Hughes was appointed to command the 11th A.F.A. Brigade with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. From June 1916 he was in action with his brigade in France and Belgium near Merris, Ypres, Armentières, Fleurbaix, and the Somme. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for especially good leadership at Fleurbaix and in the Ypres salient, and was mentioned in dispatches in January 1917. In February he was transferred to command the 5th Divisional Ammunition Column, had a period in command of the Artillery Training Depot in England, and returned to the ammunition column in June. He had taken part in the first advance to the Hindenburg line which involved great difficulties in getting the ammunition forward. He relinquished command of the 5th D.A.C. on 15 February 1918.

In March Hughes left for Australia to attend to his father's estate. Released from active duty on 1 July, he married Winifred Ada Teasdale three days later at St Stephen's Cathedral, Brisbane. He resumed work at the brewery and in April 1920 was appointed company secretary, a post which included management of the company hotels.

His interest in military service continued: in December 1919 he was appointed to command the 2nd Field Brigade, Royal Australian Artillery, and in 1927 the 5th Divisional Artillery AMF, as Colonel. He was transferred to the retired list in 1933.

In the brewery company, now known as Castlemaine Perkins Ltd, Hughes became a director in September 1939; in 1942 he retired as secretary. He died of cancer on 16 September 1951 in the Mater Misericordiae Private Hospital, Brisbane, and was buried in Toowong cemetery with Catholic rites. His wife and daughter survived him.

For twenty-five years his military career had run parallel with his business life and he tended to think of himself as a professional army officer rather than a company executive. In dress uniform, even in his fifties, he had a lean, straight-shouldered, strong appearance. As a company executive he was forceful and decisive, working conscientiously and vigorously. He was generally regarded as fair-minded and popular, if authoritarian. His estate was sworn for probate at £22,541.

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
- F.W. Speed *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 9, (MUP), 1983