



Lieutenant Colonel Peter CHARLTON RFD

[1946 – 2007]



Colonel Charlton co-authored the Club's centenary history book with Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams

Peter Charlton was born on 3 March 1946 in Newcastle, NSW; the eldest child of Alan and Mavis Charlton. Alan was an engine driver with the NSW Railways. He had enlisted with his brother in the Second World War - his brother perishing on the Sandakan–Ranau death march. Peter's siblings were a brother Phillip and a sister Beverley.

He was educated at the Hamilton Primary school (1952 – 1957) and at the selective Newcastle Boys High School (1958 - 1962). He later graduated in Commerce from the University of New South Wales in 1965. Peter subsequently studied Political Science at the University of Queensland and was a PhD candidate at the University of New England. He also studied at the Institute for Commonwealth Studies, Oxford.

After matriculating he worked for P&O in Sydney while studying at university.

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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Peter moved to Queensland in 1967, and in 1968 married Helen Knobel. Helen was born in Kilcoy and attended high school at Somerville House, Brisbane. She trained as a nurse in Brisbane before working in Sydney where she met Peter. They lived in Chapel Hill and had two children – Nicholas and Samantha.

He was an enthusiastic though not particularly skilled rugby player; and in the mid-1970's he found an outlet for his musical passion as a partner in the "Cellar Club" with "Dr Jazz" Mileham Hayes. The Club was housed in the basement of Naldham House in Mary Street (later the Brisbane Polo Club).

After working briefly for the Queensland Department of Economic Development as an economist, he was offered a finance cadetship with the Queensland afternoon paper, *The Telegraph*, in 1969 – beginning a life-long career with Queensland Newspapers that lasted 35 years. By 1976 he was finance editor and leader writer across a wide range of subjects. He joined the *Courier Mail* soon after – becoming Leader Writer in 1977, Associate Editor (1989 – 1992), Canberra Political Editor (1992 – 1996), and National Affairs Editor (in Sydney 1996 – 2007). He also contributed to *The Australian* newspaper.

In 1978 he was awarded the Commonwealth Press Union's Harry Brittain Memorial Scholarship which took him briefly to Oxford University and secondments to the *Yorkshire Post* and the Territorial Army regiment The Royal Green Jackets.

In 1976 and again in 1981 he was a Smith-Mundt Visiting Fellow in the US.

In 1989 he became a member of the Council of Griffith University, and in 1990 was appointed to the board of the Queensland Art Gallery.

Peter was a prolific author – his published works were:

- *The Thirty-Niners* (1981)
- *The Unnecessary War – Island Campaigns of the South Pacific 1944-45* (1983)
- *Pozieres, 1916: Australians on the Somme* (1986)
- *The War Against Japan 1941-42 (Australians at War)* (1988)
- *The War Against Japan 1942-45 (Australians at War)* (1989)
- *South Queensland WWII 1941-45* (1991)

- *John Stainer and the Musical Life of Victorian Britain* (1984)
- *State of Mind - why Queensland is Different.* (1987)
- *Two Flies up a Wall - The Australian Passion for Gambling* (1987)

- *United Service Club Queensland The First Century 1892-1992* (1992)
(contributing mainly to the writing of the second 50 years)

Colonel Charlton joined the Army Reserve for a brief period in Newcastle during his school days but his career as reservist took off when he was directly commissioned into the Army's Public Relations Service in 1975. Given his military history interests he transferred to the Royal Australian Infantry Corps soon afterwards and joined Queensland University Regiment to undergo regimental officer training. In senior appointments he served on the staff at Headquarters 1st Division; and was the Second-in-Command and later Commanding Officer 49th Bn Royal Queensland Regiment (1989 – 91).

In 1982, Peter was a recipient of a Prince of Wales Award – a scholarship for young army officers to enhance their individual experience and knowledge in their chosen civilian occupation or profession.

He was an enthusiastic member of the Australian Defence Association, which noted in his obituary that "Peter's varied experience as a financial and political journalist and editorialist, his intellectual credentials as a military historian, and his command and staff experiences in the Army Reserve, enabled him to be an incisive and measured reporter and commentator on defence and strategic

issues. As a journalist of the old school he was also scrupulous about checking facts and quotes, using correct terminology and applying balance and context to his coverage...”

The then Major Charlton joined the Club in 1984.

Colonel Charlton died in Sydney on 18 May 2007, aged 61 years.

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
- Interview with Ms Helen Charlton 17 October 2018
- *Courier Mail*, Ross Eastgate, 24 May 2007
- *The Australian*, 19 May 2007
- *Defender*, Australian Defence Association, Autumn 2007