



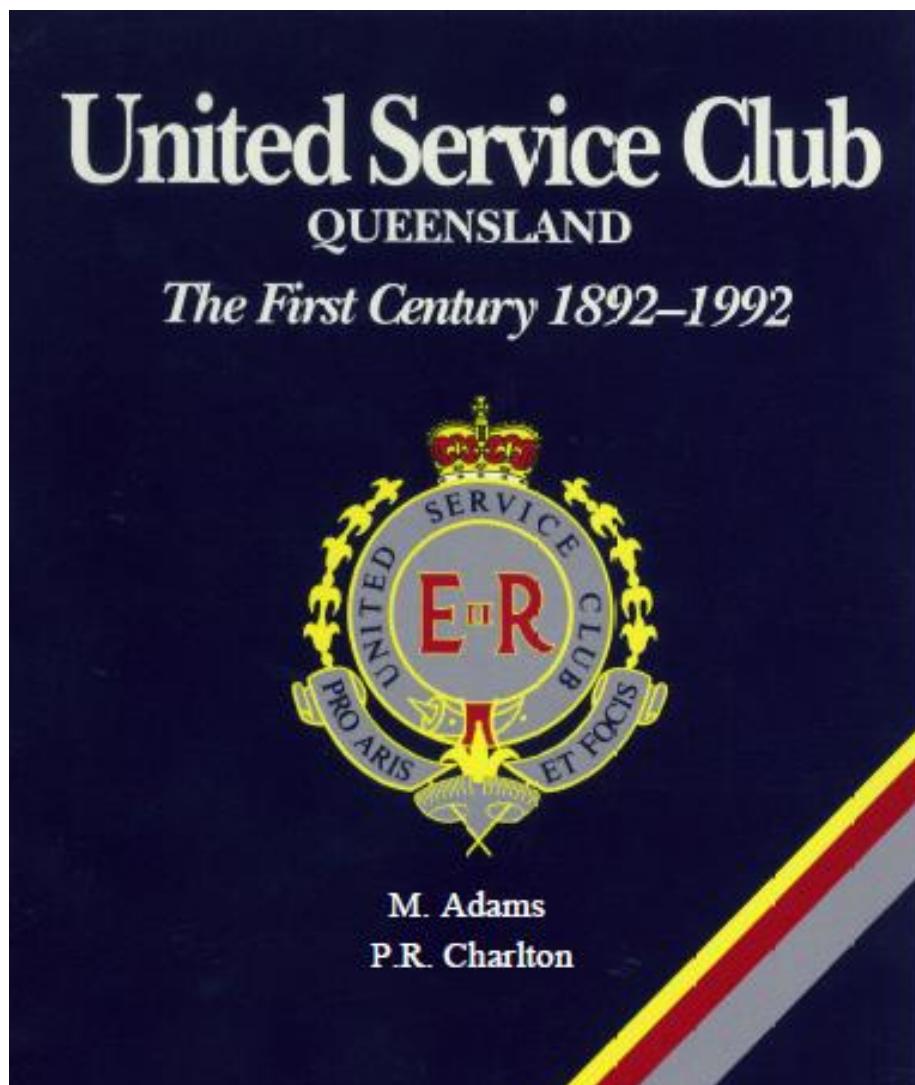
united service club

history & heritage notes

Club History 1892-1992

SECTION 4

(Chapters 11 to 13)



In the 1990s the Club ‘commissioned’ the late Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and the late Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton to compile a book that outlined the history of the United Service Club from its founding in 1892 to its centenary in 1992. Writing the Club’s history had been planned and abandoned many times in previous years, and researching this compilation was a challenging task as our record-keeping was less than fastidious and much deduction and reliance on memories were required. The book is now out of stock.

As we hold no more copies of the book, this electronic version was prepared in January 2016 to enable today’s Members to appreciate the stories and personalities of the Club’s first 100 years. There are some recurring themes across the years that may resonate today, eg membership, finances, social functions, catering quality and property proposals. Almost all the original format has been faithfully retained, including page-breaks, (to the limit of our volunteer’s ability) with a few minor and inconsequential variations here and there. It is presented in pdf format after scanning, Optical Character Recognition (OCR,) and conversion to Word format, then to pdf. As the consolidated version is over 7Mb in size, the book is presented here in pdf format **split into five sections** for shorter downloads.

We may have missed an occasional typographical error for which our volunteer apologises and blames on the OCR and the manual conversion processes combined with his unfortunate level of attention to detail.

Enter the Associates

Throughout its history, service rank distinction has never been particularly important in the United Service Club. A junior officer, even one of the most brief seniority, could expect to be treated equally to a member who had been a brigadier or a general. The only deference expected was, in the words of the novelist Evelyn Waugh, ‘the natural deference that youth owes to age’. Occasionally, however, some curious disputes arose over the privileges that pertain, not so much to ranks, but to positions within the Club. Take, for example, the matter of the vice president’s car park position, decided at a meeting in October 1965. At the time the vice president was Lieutenant Colonel Cameron who was also convenor of the house and finance sub-committee. In this latter role, rather than as vice president *per se*, Cameron had occasion to visit the Club more often than most other committee members. Because of this, suggested the president, Brigadier McEachern, the committee might consider the provision of a separate car park next to the president’s car park. Flight Lieutenant Tuckfield, an active contributor to committee discussions, was not so sure. The members, he thought, might not accept the idea. This view was supported by Lieutenant Commander Vidgen, who said there was already a feeling among members regarding free car parking facilities. And, added Tuckfield, was the position being made available to the vice president, or to the convenor of the house and finance sub-committee? Although both positions were held by the same person at that time, this position easily could change. The weighty matter of the vice president’s car park position was put to the vote and by a margin of two, carried.*

By 1966, the possible disposal of the Green House was something of a dead issue. The various proposals put forward in the early part of the decade had lapsed, partly because of excessive optimism on the part of the potential developers and partly because of the economic conditions at the time. The sub-committee set up to

*In one of those curious coincidences of Club life, the question of car parking privileges occurred while the authors were lunching in the snack bar during the preparation of this book. Why, asked one member at lunch, did the immediate past president warrant a car park? Gentle discussion followed for a moment or two until it was pointed out to the questioning member - ironically by Lieutenant Richard Cameron - that one way he could ensure a parking position as immediate past president was to run for the office of president himself. Discussion then lapsed. Now the immediate past president is also a member of the executive sub-committee, whose members are constantly at the Club for the Club.

consider proposals for the Green House settled into a kind of benign state, to be revived from time to time and then at never more than the suggestion level. As well, the members were well aware that they had assets of considerable value in the Club's property including the Green House; they were in no hurry to develop these assets or to allow others to profit from the foresight of their predecessors.

Running through the discussions on the use of the Green House, from the very early days of its occupancy by the Moreton Club, was the possibility of its conversion to a ladies annex. This would have filled several requirements: firstly, it would have offered ladies somewhere for afternoon tea after shopping or other pursuits; secondly, it would have gone some of the way towards solving the vexed question of women in the Club.

The proposal to convert part of the Green House into a ladies annex had been aired at the 1965 general meeting. As Lieutenant Colonel Little pointed out, the idea was by no means new; it had been first proposed in 1946, 20 years before, and rejected then. Now, however, the mood of the members had changed. Several speakers cautiously supported the idea and even suggested that ladies might be admitted as associate members. As was so often the case, it was Little who moved the motion; now the procedures were under way.

It was a tortuous process. When the matter was first aired in sub-committee, the wretched question of car parking arose. If the ladies were allowed to use the annex, would they also be allowed to use the car park? And if this was the case, members should be told. That information had better be included in the circular. Would the ladies be allowed to drink liquor in the annex? This was another important question, and one with clear licensing implications. Did the Club's liquor licence actually extend to the Green House premises? A moot point, but one which could have embarrassing consequences. Would members support the idea of their ladies being able to drink in the Club? Some sub-committee members appear, from the minutes at least, to have some quaintly old-fashioned ideas about the drinking habits of their ladies. Another problem for the sub-committee; another proposition to be put to members.

Finally, after some months of hard work, some questions for members were formulated. It seems that this process was akin to a medieval scholar examining a text, such was the care and consideration (not to mention the slow speed of the process). The questions, however, were simple and clear:

Are you in favour of establishing a ladies annex?
If so, are you in favour of amending the rules to include associate members?
Would you be prepared to nominate your wife or any other eligible person?

Members had some useful information upon which to base their decisions. If the

Club wanted to establish a Ladies Annex, then the Green House was the only possible place. No suitable alternative existed. There were considerable costs involved. One alternative, of taking over part of the ground floor, meant capital spending of about £2500 would be needed to take over a portion of the ground floor; running costs of this area , including the repayment of capital and allowing for rental loss, would be about £1600. The second alternative was rather more expensive. It proposed using the function room, in addition to the first proposal. Another £500 was required.

Quite simply, for either proposal to work, the ladies needed to be attracted to the Club, not just for afternoon tea, but also for luncheon. To have the ladies in for lunch would mean the provision of meals and liquor. This could not be done without creating a new class of Club member, that of associate, otherwise, under the licensing laws, ladies would have to be accompanied by members when visiting the Club. That was not the idea at all.

Eligibility for associate members was relatively straight-forward: ‘wives of members; widows of deceased members; ladies who hold or have held a commission in the Armed Forces of any Commonwealth country’.* Here seemed to be an important breakthrough, not just for the wives and widows of members, but also for women who could join the Club in their own right, albeit as associate members, so long as they held the same qualifications for membership as the male members - ‘hold or have held a commission in the armed forces of any Commonwealth country’.

At a time now when human rights legislation has forced other clubs to examine the question of female members, it is significant that the United Service Club, admittedly in a circuitous fashion, was looking at the issue a quarter of a century earlier. The proposal to offer associate membership to ladies holding a commission in the armed forces was, however, dropped before it got to the annual meeting. The membership sub-committee examined the question of admitting ladies who had held commissions in March 1969, and decided against the proposal. For the time being, at least, the question of ladies who held commissions in any of the armed services was simply put aside as one that was just too difficult to resolve.

At that time, members of the Club certainly comprised few feminist sympathisers; the minutes of a meeting soon afterwards are fascinating for their glimpse of masculine thinking. The Legacy Club of Brisbane wanted to hold a dinner and make a presentation to the matron of ‘Moorlands’, that splendid building on Coronation Drive used then as a convalescent hospital. Certainly, said the committee, but if the matron was to attend the dinner, she had to enter and leave the Club by way of the Green House annex.**

*This proposal was first aired in the decade following World War II. It attracted some support, but not enough to become a reality.

**Apparently, too, the Matron was happy to comply with this ruling. It is difficult to imagine a matron today doing so.

The circular, so long in its preparation and sending, was well received by members. By 21 March 1966, the president was able to tell the committee meeting that, of the replies received then, 404 offered unqualified support for the proposal, 24 supported the idea of the annex but opposed to giving ladies associate membership, 88 members supported both the annex and associate membership but were not prepared to nominate any associate members and 74 diehards opposed both the annex and associate membership.

There were really two questions for the committee to consider. Whether members supported the idea sufficiently to proceed with the proposal and secondly, irrespective of members' support, whether the annex would pay its way. There seemed to be some doubts among committee members, particularly Lieutenant Colonel Jack Kelly, a barrister and later a judge, whether the Green House would be granted a liquor licence. Kelly knew well, from his practice at the Bar, that the Queensland licensing laws were not always as clear-cut as they might have been and that the granting of further licences could not be assumed. Again, too, the question of the Club's future property needs impinged on the issue.

The committee members took the question very cautiously indeed. First, they agreed to the idea of the annex, no doubt with the support of members clear on this question. This refurbished annex was opened in time for Show week in August 1966. Later, members voted on the question of associate members at that year's annual general meeting. Again it is worthwhile to cover the debate in some detail because of the useful insights it offers into members' thinking at the time.

The motion to introduce associate members into the Club was moved by Brigadier McEachern. The amendments to the rules proposed that any lady elected as an associate member could use the annex in her own right, without it being necessary for her to be accompanied by her husband. This, however, did not deprive her husband of the right to entertain his wife in the Club should he so desire.

Squadron Leader Loxton asked whether associate members would be due for levies in the same way as male members, would officers of the womens' services be eligible for membership and could associate members invite guests into the annex. He was told that associate members would be liable for levies, that the associate membership should be restricted to the two classes - wives and widows - until the popularity of the annex and its capacity to handle the demand was established. On the other question, associate members could invite male members into the annex.

Few other questions needed to be asked; the meeting was told that the loss of rental from the annex was \$12 a week, the level of associate membership fees had been based on the capital outlay involved and the anticipated running costs. Lieutenant Colonel Little reminded the meeting that he had proposed such a scheme 20 years earlier. At that time, however, it lacked support. Little said he was pleased that the scheme had been introduced and that he thoroughly supported the motion. With

that, the motion was put and was passed unanimously.

The time was right for associate members, given that the majority of those members elected after World War II were now entering comfortable middle age, at a time when their children had grown and their wives had more time for visits to the city and for opportunities to use the annex. The changing age of the membership meant changing demands on the Club.

Within a year, 198 associate members had joined the Club. In the annual report for 1967, the president, Lieutenant Colonel Cameron, said the response had been most encouraging and there was no doubt that this section of the membership would continue to grow and the ladies annex continue to increase in popularity. It was perhaps the introduction of associate membership that caused the committee to look at the question of mixed accommodation. The question arose during a discussion on the use of accommodation by visiting officers, although the Naval & Military Club in Melbourne already had such accommodation and the experiment there was being eagerly watched in Brisbane. In June 1968, Lieutenant Colonel Cameron told the committee that it had the power to permit mixed accommodation. In this, he was supported by Flight Lieutenant Tuckfield, who reminded the meeting that the Club lost potential country members because the Club did not have mixed accommodation. The committee agreed to the proposal; it also agreed to making available to ladies the front area of the first floor, forward of the lift and front staircase with access through the lounge to the ladies annex.* Another barrier to the ladies use of the Club was removed in August 1969, when the committee decided that ladies could be taken to lunch on Saturdays. Previously this was considered an all-male privilege; little by little the barriers were coming down; the membership of the Club expanding and changing from the heyday of the immediate post-war years.**

* * *

The potential pool of membership of the Club for the Club grew in the mid-1960s with the re-introduction of national service for the Vietnam War. Young men were required to register for national service in their nineteenth year; the selection process was by ballot,*** with birth-dates being chosen until each intake had

*The authors have heard some anecdotal evidence about the presence of ladies in the accommodation areas on the first floor. 'No one minded much', recalled one member with a twinkle in his eye, 'so long as you smuggled them down the back staircase and out of the Club before breakfast'.

**Rather too quickly for one member, a retired station book-keeper who had been away when the all-important changes about females in the Club were taking place. One morning, he was sitting quietly in the downstairs lounge when a lady guest descended the stairs and walked out of the Club. The member's astonishment was matched only by speechlessness.

***Using the same device that was used to draw the New South Wales State Lottery.

sufficient young men. If passed medically fit, the young men so chosen had then to serve for two years in the army, with the possibility of being sent to Vietnam. Alternatively, a young man could opt to serve in the Citizens Military Forces. He had to join the CMF before the ballot and, if his birth-date was chosen, then serve for a total of six years. Many university students took this option and the Queensland University Regiment, then commanded by a Club member, Lieutenant Colonel R I ‘Sam’ Harrison, was particularly strong in the late 1960s-early 1970s. The expansion of the CMF created a demand for young officers; many university students were commissioned and, with the graduates of the recently established Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU), provided a useful source of new, young members. Other Club members then serving with the CMF in positions involving the commissioning of young officers were Lieutenant Colonels (as they were then) Colin Wilson and Vern Mullins. Both were enthusiastic and dedicated recruiters for the Club; Lieutenant Colonel Wilson, then commanding the 49th Battalion, The Royal Queensland Regiment, also held frequent dinners for his officers in the Club. These dinners were rarely quiet or sedate occasions.

The minutes for 6 February 1967 reflect this new source of young officers. Lieutenant Colonel Cameron noted there was a graduation ceremony for newly commissioned CMF officers to take place on 18 February. He had spoken to the OCTU’s commanding officer and felt it would be of great advantage to the Club to invite these graduates to be guests at a drinks party some days before. No doubt, too, the advantages of belonging to the United Service Club would have been gently pointed out to these young men. In his annual report that year, the president noted that ‘as a result of ... interest by the Club, the majority of young officers graduating from the metropolitan area of Brisbane have now joined the Club’. The interest was helped along in a material fashion, as well; the Club also donated a sword of honour to the top graduate of the OCTU. This sword, although donated by the Club, was actually presented to the student by the General Officer Commanding Northern Command at the time. Apparently some committee members felt that the ceremony should have been carried out by the president. This was discussed at the February meeting, and resolved to have ‘appropriate discussions’ for the next year. Many of the young officers who joined the United Service Club in this period have retained their membership as they have become prominent in business and the professions over the past two decades. Their ranks include three current Supreme Court judges - Mr Justice Paul De Jersey, Mr Justice John Byrne and Mr Justice John Dowsett, all of whom were commissioned as officers of the Queensland University Regiment in the late 1960s.

* * *

As the country came out of the early 1960s credit squeeze, the Club's properties continued to attract potential developers. In 1967 the committee was approached by Stuart Bros, a property developer and building company, with yet another proposal to develop the Wickham Terrace site. Several months elapsed before this proposal actually came before the committee, and it seemed to have changed slightly in that time. The correspondence does not survive and we are left only with the minutes and the annual reports for the period. Certainly by April 1967, the committee was considering a proposal that Stuart Bros would build a 120-unit motel block, with the Club occupying two floors on top. Stuart Bros also proposed that the Club become the mortgagor for the whole project; the developers would arrange for a motel organisation to take over the tenancy on a 20 year lease with the rental from this, plus the Club's own rental, to be the basis of the repayment of the loan. At the end of this period, the entire property would revert to Club ownership.

Consideration of the proposal took several months. In September that committee had three main concerns about the proposal: the financial standing of the lessee; could the lessee successfully run a motel and pay the proposed rental; and would the space allocated to the Club be sufficient for our needs, and would the proposed layout be practical. Again the committee drew on the legal expertise of one of its number, Lieutenant Colonel Kelly. As the Club was to be located on the top of the building, it was doubtful whether a separate licence would be issued for a bottle department on the ground floor. Lieutenant Colonel Kelly said the issue should be explored as soon as possible. It was clear that a special sub-committee should examine the proposal and report back.

On closer examination of the proposal, the committee decided not to go ahead. Lieutenant Colonel Kelly's point about the licensing requirement was one important factor in this decision but of over-riding importance was the economics. In a special report to the committee, the sub-committee noted:

The Club liability would also extend to retiring the present overdraft, if present improvements were demolished - as they would have to be - plus the cost of 'bridging' accommodation, pending availability of new premises. To this would have to be added the cost to the Club of furnishing its own new premises. One thing is clear- apart from the bridging accommodation, refurnishing, extinction of bank overdraft and depreciation, the Club would be committed to a fixed additional annual outlay of a minimum of \$26,842 or some \$500 a week. The prospect of this responsibility is formidable.

Still, the committee was keen on the idea of redeveloping the site, although negotiations with Stuart Bros petered out. The minutes note that 'any' proposal would be received and considered; Civil and Civic Pty Ltd showed an interest in the Club's premises. After the Stuart Bros proposal had been examined in some detail,

it was clear that motel type accommodation was not suitable for the site. Wickham Terrace, with the construction of the Tower Mill motel, was quickly assuming the mantle of ‘motel row’, although the committee thought that a building which contained shops and offices might be more suitable as it would be less expensive to construct and offered the possibilities of greater returns. This was before the construction of major international five-star standard hotels in Brisbane such as the Sheraton and the Hilton. At this time, motel accommodation was on the outskirts of the Central Business District, with a series of buildings along Wickham Terrace, others along Alice Street and across the river at Kangaroo Point. Proposals to convert the Club’s land to a motel-type building needed to be closely examined at the time; the Club was fortunate to have committees comprised, in the main, of conservative and cautious men.

Lieutenant Colonel Little retired from the committee in 1967, after 26 years membership, including two years as president. As Lieutenant Colonel Cameron said in his annual report for that year, ‘It was mainly due to his efforts and foresight that we own our valuable property in Wickham Terrace today.’ But Little was back at the December 1967, committee meeting, where he was presented with a gold-plated key to the committee room, which he was invited to use ‘at his pleasure’.* It was a thoughtful gesture to a man who had devoted much of his life to the Club.

In 1968, the Club changed the method of categorising allied members. Originally this category of membership applied to any person who held a commission in the armed service of any friendly foreign power. In 1962, this rule was amended so that the privilege of allied membership would not be extended to anyone not already enjoying that privilege. Apparently this had led to complications. However, there were a number of former American officers living in Queensland who had raised the possibility of their joining the Club. The 1968 rule change allowed them to do so.

At the same annual general meeting, Major Peter Henderson raised the question of the Club’s catering. Later the Club’s solicitor, always a good Club man and often an indefatigable questioner at annual meetings, Major Henderson was perturbed that the standard was not good enough to attract members to eat in the dining room. The financial position of the Club was strong still, but membership was declining, and the committee should take more positive steps to increase the number of members using the dining-room. It was a good point, because Brisbane’s restaurants started to multiply from the end of the 1960s and the Club had some stiff competition for eating places. And, as Lieutenant Colonel Little said in his trustee’s report, the feeling of pessimism among members at the financial status was not justified. The

*And, one occasion, to the embarrassment of Little and his family. the Club stalwart had mixed up his nights and was entertaining the family on the night of a committee meeting. Such was Little’s personality, however, the committee members waited until their former president and his family left.

overdraft had been reduced by \$4000 and there was a surplus of real estate over secured credit of \$97,238.

The Club was soon to add to its property. In March, 1969, Lieutenant Colonel Cameron told the committee that his company had been negotiating with the owner of a property situated at No 51, Berry Street, Spring Hill. The price originally asked was \$21,000 but the owner had come down to \$18,000. Another property on the eastern side of Berry Street had sold for \$30,000 but Lieutenant Colonel Cameron said he regarded this figure as far too high. The new president, Captain K C Campbell, had arranged a loan of \$18,000 over eight years at 6 ¾ percent. Thus financed, the Berry Street property was bought and so the potential existed for improved car-parking facilities. As the annual report notes, the allotment with the frontage to Berry Street was immediately put into use as a car park. The property acquisition program continued with the purchase of San Remo on Upper Edward Street soon afterwards for \$26,500.

The late 1960s saw the introduction of the Club's monthly bulletin, UNISER. Previously, the Club had published a mid-winter bulletin but this was the first attempt to keep members informed of events in the Club on such a regular basis. This was essential for members were finding other attractions in a city that was, perhaps only then, beginning to emerge from the effects of World War II and the slowness of the post-war years. Keeping the interest of members was a constant problem, as Captain Yates, the 1963 president, had noted.

Gentlemen [he wrote in that year's annual report] we are inclined to overlook the fact that in addition to being members of a Club, we are members of a very considerable business and owners of a most valuable and spacious property. Therefore it behoves all of us to take a more active interest in the affairs of our Club. Your committee will always look forward to receiving constructive suggestions from members in this matter.

Yet during the 1960s, membership actually declined. The 1960 annual report lists 2601 members, down from the 2695 members the previous year. By the end of the decade, the Club had 2294 members, up slightly from the year before with 2265. In the 1969 annual report, the president, Captain Campbell wrote:

It is gratifying to note that our membership figures are improving. This, of course, is reflected by the attendance within the Club and at our very successful functions during the year by members and their ladies...It is gratifying to note that the reducing membership of the last few years has been arrested. This in no small way is due to the younger officers of the services who have seen the value of Club membership and their interest in the Club is greatly appreciated.

The 1960s also saw the Club begin to acquire gifts and property which continues to adorn the premises to this day. In 1967, for example, Sir Byrne Hart, then a trustee,

donated an elegant chandelier which was hung in the coffee lounge and which now hangs in the dining room. An allied member, Captain J F H ter Meulen gave the Club what was described as a ‘a unique and very beautiful madeira tapestry which bears the seal of the Portuguese Government indicating that it is the only work of its kind in the world’. The 5th Light Horse association gave the Club a bust of long-time member Sir Donald Cameron, commanding officer of the regiment at the end of World War I. In the 1966 annual report, Brigadier McEachern appealed to members ‘to honour the Club with art gifts for the enrichment of its atmosphere and as permanent expression of appreciation of the Club’s objectives, its fellowship and its place in the affairs of Officers in several wars’.

The following year, Lieutenant Colonel Cameron was able to record that the Club had added to its collection: an Ivor Hele reproduction of signallers in action in New Guinea, donated by Captain A G ‘Bert’ Brayne; a shield bearing crossed kukris and the regimental badges of the four Gurkha regiments then still with the British Army, from Captain John Somerville; a frame depicting World War I colour patches from Major Bob Collier; a print of the First Australian Fleet entering Sydney Harbour from Captain Reg. Walter and from Captain Ken Campbell, an original painting by John Rowell of a pastoral scene. Although the donations of art works to the Club did not cease, subsequent annual reports for the rest of the decade make no mention of recent acquisitions.

In many ways, too, the 1960s saw the maturing of the Club and certainly of its members. The slow decline of the cricket club activities suggests that the dreaded *anno domino* was catching up with members. At the beginning of the decade, the annual reports listed about 20 fixtures either played or to be played by the Club. By the end of the decade, however the cricket club was scarcely mentioned in the annual report and only infrequently in the minutes; certainly the active cricketers of the early 1950s - the Tuckfields, the Browns, the Murphys and their like - were settling for the occasional social matches. The decade of the 1960s for the Club was also, for so many of the World War II members, their decade of the forties. It is a period in a man’s life when the physical and sporting limitations imposed by encroaching middle age are finally, if at times reluctantly, accepted.

Although the late 1960s were turbulent years, the Club remained largely untouched. There is no mention in the minutes or the newsletters of the war in Vietnam, or the divisions that Australia’s involvement had created here. Young officers were still choosing to hold their wedding receptions in the Club; younger members were contributing greatly to the Club’s continued prosperity. The Club ended the 1960s in good financial shape, with solid membership lists, but also with a realisation among members that changed drinking and entertaining habits had made the position of clubs such as the United Service rather less comfortable than before. From now on, successive committees would struggle with the problems caused by reduced trading and with attempts to restore the position to something approaching that enjoyed in the immediate post war years.

CHAPTER TWELVE

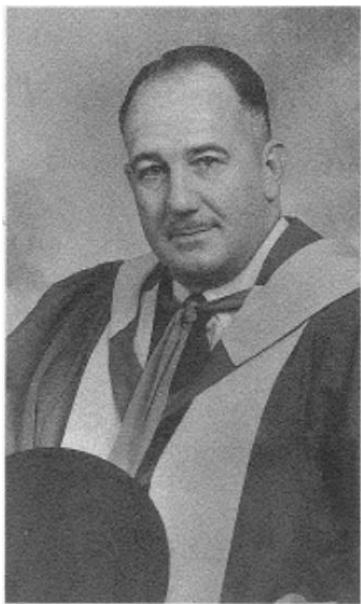
New Challenges

A measure of the difficulties being experienced by licensed clubs in the early 1970s can be gained from the 1971 annual report. In it the president, Wing Commander Gordon Olive, had some gloomy news for members. The past year, he said, had produced a number of serious problems. After a normally buoyant festive season, member's support for both the bar and the dining room had declined dramatically. Unlike earlier years, which had seen similar declines, trading had failed to recover after the holiday season. The decline continued until August (Exhibition Time) when there was some recovery. Indeed, 1971 was not a good year for the Club. Profit dropped by nearly \$21,000, resulting from increased wages - up by \$12,000 - and a reduced profit from lower trading by \$9000. Added the president in his annual report:

Whilst it is expected that the higher annual subscription will assist in maintaining the Club in a reasonable financial state, a complete review of the staffing position has also been carried out, which has resulted in some retrenchments. These savings will obviously be reflected in our future figures but members must appreciate that this could result in some possible reductions of service. An example of this is that the Top Bar will in future not open until 11.30 a.m. and that on Saturdays drinks will be served from the servery bar.

Wing Commander Olive said several reasons were being put forward for the poor trading position. These included: 'Economic pressures mounting at an alarming rate, especially school and university fees which are believed to concern a majority of our patrons, especially the ex-World War II members; steep rises in the cost of food and drinks as a result of the very large rises in the liquor trades employees' award; increased dedication and devotion to duty displayed by police breathalyser teams; the somewhat protracted and hot summer which discouraged city-based members from "climbing the hill"; increased numbers of city members becoming members of other clubs which were much easier to reach, especially in the hot summer months; increasing number of our members making a determined effort to reduce their intake of alcohol on their doctor's advice'.

Whatever the reasons, said Wing Commander Olive, the decline in trading worried the committee and many questions about the future needed to be faced. 'Not the least of these has been the location of the Club and whether it is likely to be



*Wing Commander Frederick
George Christensen (1913–
69). President 1957–59.*



*Major General Donald Ross Kerr CBE
ED (1910–85). President 1960–61.*



*Captain James Thomas
Yates. Born 1914. President
1962–63.*

Club Ball, 1967. HE The Hon Sir Alan Mansfield KCMG receiving a debutante.



United Service Club, Queensland



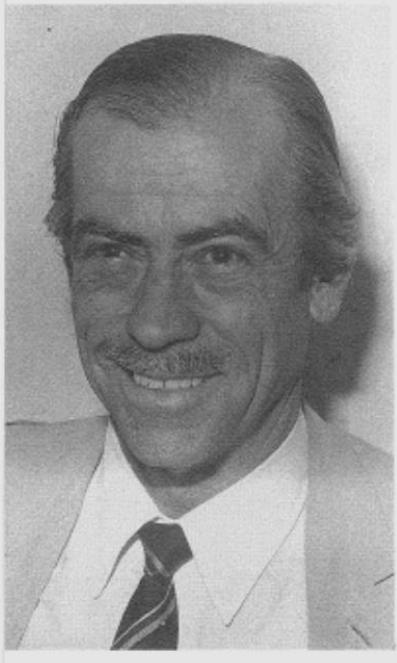
*Brigadier Cranston Albury
McEachern DSO ED (1905–
84). President 1964–65.*



*Lieutenant Colonel Richard William
Cameron DSO ED. Born 1916. Presi-
dent 1966–67. Trustee 1984.*



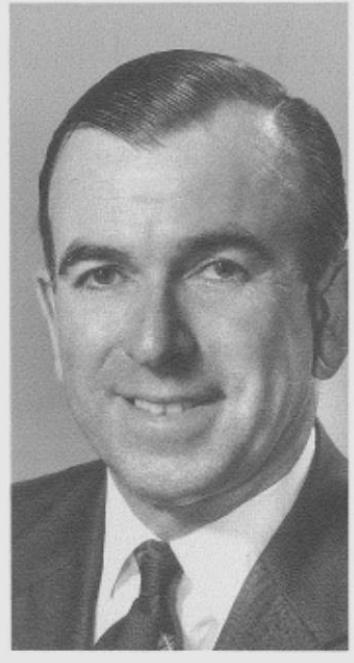
*Captain Kenneth Carlisle
Campbell. Born 1912.
President 1968–69.*



*Wing Commander Charles
Gordon Chaloner Olive CBE
DFC AE (1916–88). Presi-
dent 1970–71.*



*Air Commodore Deryck William
Kingwell CBE DSO. Born 1916.
President 1972.*



*Group Captain Percy
Raymund Smith. Born 1920.
President 1973–74.*

increasingly in the wrong place in the years ahead, as all members get older,' added Olive. It is an interesting point, and one which did not seem to emerge 25 years earlier when the Club first moved up to Wickham Terrace. However, as members became older, the long climb up Edward Street became less attractive to some, particularly in summer. It might well be that Gordon Olive was excessively gloomy in that report. The steepness of the hill up Edward Street does not seem to have deterred even quite senior members on the warmest of days. At the same time, the Club was losing a small but significant number of members to other clubs, the Queensland Club for professional men whose careers were well established; the Brisbane Club for businessmen; Tattersalls Club for sportsmen. In Brisbane, the United Service Club is *sui generis* and seeks neither to compete with other clubs nor attract their members.

Still occasionally at committee meetings, a disgruntled member would remark about the unfavourable comparisons between the standard of meals served at these latter two clubs and the standard of those served at the United Service Club. It was pointed out that both Tattersalls and the Brisbane Club could subsidise the operations of their dining rooms from the very considerable income from property investments and in the case of the latter, very much higher subscriptions. Still, the United Service Club was at something of a cross-roads. In his president's report that year, Olive also outlined the options available to members: negotiate with a developer to build on the site and thus modernise and consequently improve the Club's facilities - taking part of the new building as ours; sell the site for a suitable amount and build elsewhere in the city; discuss with other clubs of comparable status the possibility of promoting a club building which could house two or more clubs providing parking and possibly service facilities (kitchen and accommodation) in common. This had been achieved in London with some of our affiliated clubs.

As Olive said, one over-riding consideration was the size of the membership in 20 years time that could be predicted with any accuracy 'when most of us will no longer be the active supporters we are today and when a large potential membership resulting from World War II has declined to peace time dimensions with a potential of perhaps a fifth or less of the present membership. Remember, too, that if we are spared another war, the number of eligible people will fall off very significantly. Thus the space requirements of this Club could be much less than it is at the present moment which, right now, is considerably in excess of our needs'.

It is possible to detect in the minutes and other records for this early 1970s period a sense that, perhaps, the Club, and the various sub-committees, might have been trying to do too much. Certainly for some members the enthusiasm was still there for the Club's major activities each year - the Ball, the Patron's Dinner, the Show Week At Home - but some of the other events had begun to trail off. For example, in the 1970 report, the president, Captain K C Campbell, noted: 'There were occasions when we would have liked to have seen more of our members and their guests at some

of the functions, although the lack of members in no way detracted from the success of the occasion'. But that year, the committee had cancelled one planned social activity, a Swinging Seventies Night, and within the sports and social sub-committee, there was some careful examination of the number of functions the Club was holding.

On 18 January, 1971, the sports and social sub-committee met to produce an outline programme of activities for the year. Convened by Lieutenant Colonel Rodney Fay*, this sub-committee was mindful that, in the opinion of many members, too many functions had been held the year before. In the Club calendar, some functions were sacrosanct: The Annual Ball, Exhibition Week At Home, Patrons Dinner and Wine Tastings. The Governor-General had been invited to dinner; that, too, was an immovable feast so long as the Governor-General accepted. However, there existed clearly the feeling that each new sub-committee approached its task with enthusiasm, anxious to do as well, at least, if not better than its predecessor; the result was to impose a social burden on members. This, of course, is not uncommon in any organisation where the leadership changes on a regular basis. Most service men and women are all too familiar with the 'new broom' kind of leader who is anxious to show that he is going to do the job better than his predecessor - usually at the expense of his subordinates.

Lieutenant Colonel Fay was a member who enjoyed the company of his fellows, a 'clubbable man', to borrow Dr Johnson's description of his old friend Boswell;** he led a group of equally clubbable companions in Lieutenant Colonel Colin Wilson, Group Captain Ray Smith and Captain Bill Kidston. Even so, this sub-committee was forced to modify its programme to suit the demands of members perhaps less committed to the Club than themselves.

Still, apart from the social difficulties, the Club committee was continually assessing the real property potential and opportunities of their premises. In early 1970, the developers, Civil & Civic, approached the re-development sub-committee with plans for a car park to be built on or at the rear of the site. At the time, the Club was looking for a building project that would give a reasonable return but at a cost which the Club could afford. In this matter, Civil & Civic had as a member of their staff a Club member, Lieutenant Commander J E J Nottidge, who outlined in detail his firm's proposal. The car park, presumably similar to the one located just southeast of the Club, was to have lifts and air-conditioning. Because of Civil & Civic's reputation in the field, Lieutenant Commander Nottidge believed there would be

*Later Major-General Fay AO, RFD, ED, Chief of the Army Reserve.

** 'The clubbable man does not merely get something out of his club, but in addition, he contributes something to it. He possesses more than the mere 'fitness' for membership which is, after all, a negative virtue; the club will be, by however so little, the richer by his membership.' President's message, *United Service Club Bulletin*, Midwinter, 1960.

few problems in co-ordinating construction. Finance for the project could be arranged, either through the State Government Insurance Office, as Suncorp was then known, or through the MLC Assurance Association. The mood of this early meeting was enthusiastic, but also cautious. It was made clear to the Civil & Civic representative that any project should be self-supporting from the start, because of the recent rise in interest rates.

By now, a certain pattern was emerging in approaches to the Club for redevelopment. The ideas appeared to be attractive but often required the Club to assume a proportion - sometimes a large proportion - of the risk. The developer's profit, presumably, would be in the construction and subsequent letting. As Lieutenant Colonel Cameron pointed out at a later committee meeting, all the propositions so far put to the Club depended on the Club financing the development. The present Club site was profitable, acceptable to members and, if it was to be re-developed, the Club would have to move during the construction phase with possible adverse results on the activities. Here was a central problem for any re-development proposition: How was the Club to function during construction phase? Moreover, what was the point of going into debt to finance future facilities that were not then needed by members and might not be needed in the future?

Efforts, too, to increase the membership were resulting in a spread of members. There were significant numbers of members who had joined before World War II; there were men who had joined in the huge expansion following that war and the move to Wickham Terrace and there were newer members, who had been commissioned in either the Regular Army or the Citizens Military Force since the end of the war and particularly in the expansion of the army for Vietnam.* This spread of members, while healthy for the Club's future, also made it difficult for committees to provide suitable social functions and at a reasonable price. What was a reasonable price to a World War II vintage member, now well established and comfortably off, was prohibitive for a younger member, with the responsibilities of families. For example, the sports and social sub-committee on 19 August 1970 noted that the number of members attending functions was declining: 160 had attended the Terrace Party; only 73 the 'April in Paris' evening of that year.

The reason behind the discussion was the concern the sub-committee has had for some time regarding the costs of 'In Club' functions. It is considered that the high costs are one of the reasons ...for the low attendances.

*To take the applicants for membership from one random meeting at the beginning of the 1970s, they included: Major M J Harris MC, who was an early 1960s graduate of the Royal Military College, Duntroon and later commanded the 1st Military District. Other members admitted on that day include at least two recent graduates of the University Regiment and a regimental medical officer for CMF field regiment. A 1967 member of the Club was Lt M J Keating an RMC graduate of that year and, at the time of writing, Brigadier Keating, commander of the 3rd Brigade in Townsville.

That year, too, the sports and social sub-committee had some problems with the ball. Held on 7 August at the City Hall, the official guest was the General Officer Commanding Northern Command, Major General A L MacDonald. The ball was extremely popular and attracted a large number of members and guests. However, as the annual report, somewhat cryptically notes, there were some problems: ‘The committee is aware of the comments received from a number of members who attended the Ball over the enthusiasm of the bands, and this will be borne in mind when planning the ball for next year’. It appears that the music was simply too loud for all members, and not just those whose musical tastes might have been formed in days before bands played with amplifiers and elaborate sound systems. It must have been a difficult night, because the minutes of the sports and social sub-committee record: ‘Despite efforts during the evening by the secretary to reduce the noise, it continued to be too loud’. And, added the minutes:

In future the sub-committee [is] to pay more attention to the engaging of the band, and if possible, hear them before making a decision. This will mean that it will have to engage the bands for 1971 early in the year. It is also realised that there was not sufficient difference between the sound of the bands and the type of music.

Following suggestions the previous year, the Club actually engaged two bands for the Ball so that there would be music most, if not all, the time. However the Club had yet to come to terms with the enormous changes that afflicted popular music in the 1960s and 1970s. Gone were the orchestras of earlier years; gone, too, were many of the smaller jazz bands who could have provided more suitable music for a ball.* What was left was a limited choice of sometimes indifferent musicians who disguised, often none too well, their lack of talent behind a wall of sound. The effect on the members and their ladies at the Ball can only be imagined; the sports and social sub-committee was suitably chastened by the experience.

In December 1970, at the annual general meeting, the Club took the then momentous step of admitting to the category of associate members those ladies who had held commissions in any of the armed forces. Speaking to the amendment, Lieutenant Colonel Cameron said that when associate membership had first been introduced, the committee had been conservative in its outlook until it had first ascertained how many ladies would take advantage of the proposition. At that time, the Club had 225 associate members who were, according to the annual report, using the facilities of the Club in greater numbers. Under these circumstances, the time had now come for the category to be extended to female commissioned officers.

*Like the Varsity Five, which played frequently at Government House in the 1960s and which featured on clarinet, a onetime Club member and later Colonel Lachie Thompson and, on banjo the now prominent Brisbane doctor and former RAAF medical officer, Mileham Hayes.

This, many years before other clubs were forced to open their members lists to women, the United Service Club was doing so, admittedly in the different - if not lesser - category of associate members.

The Battle of the Coral Sea, in May 1942, had always been commemorated in Brisbane, usually with a senior American officer, either from the US Navy or, sometimes the US Air Force, attending. In the late 1960s, perhaps due to the preoccupations of the war in Vietnam, those visits to Brisbane ended. In 1970, however, the American Government re-introduced the custom and the Club was visited by Rear Admiral David F Welch of the US Navy. The visit was a great success, with a well-attended address by the admiral in the top bar, after which he was lunched by the committee. The visit, however, did not necessarily mean that the following year's function would be simply organised and prepared.

In recent years, certainly since the New Zealand Government withdrew from the ANZUS Treaty, the Coral Sea celebrations have assumed a greater importance in Australian-American relations. In 1992, 50 years after the battle, the celebrations reached a peak of interest, helped on both sides of the Pacific by the visit of the United States President George Bush early in the year. Certainly interest on both sides of the Pacific has fluctuated over the years and will probably never be as great as in 1992. But in 1971, after a couple of years of low interest, there was some scepticism about the form of the day within the Club. Even before the identity of the official guest was known, the Committee was making it clear that they had some reservations about the day.

At a committee meeting on 2 February 1971 Lieutenant Colonel Fay said he supported the idea of a Coral Sea lunch, but members would not come unless the official guest was a serving officer. Group Captain Smith, who was also vice-president of the Australian-American Association, said the association's view was that the service implications of Coral Sea Day be played down, and the day be seen as a general mark of friendship between the two nations. And so the discussion continued. The American Government had decided to send out another senior naval officer, Admiral McCain, who was entertained in the Club in the usual manner. But the minutes suggest that not all the committee members were convinced the 'tradition' had been properly fixed. That meeting in February 1971 also decided to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Royal Australian Air Force and in some style, not surprisingly given the preponderance of former and serving RAAF officers on the committee at the time. These included: the president Wing Commander Gordon Olive, Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams, Air Commodore Deryck Kingwell, Flight Lieutenant jock Tuckfield, Group Captain Ray Smith and Squadron Leader Des Dyer.

Originally it was decided that the Club should hold a formal dinner, on 2 April 1971, to commemorate the birthday. It was thought to be an excellent idea, but one small problem existed: Who should be the guest of honour? At the following meeting

in March, the president admitted that, so far, he had not been able to come up with a guest of honour for the dinner. If no senior RAAF officer could be found, then the Club would invite the Governor, Sir Alan Mansfield, to attend. Then, at a meeting of the sports and social sub-committee on 10 March, the president reported that Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams had accepted an invitation to be the guest of honour at the Club. It was an inspired choice; 'Dicky' Williams, is regarded as the 'father' of the modern-day RAAF. The president reported that attempts were being made to have Sir Richard flown to Brisbane for the dinner, but if this could not be done, then the Club would pay the fare and, of course, provide accommodation for the night. Sir Frederick Scherger, a former Chief of the Air Staff and then general manager of Trans Australian Airlines, agreed to the Club's request to fly this distinguished Australian aviator to Brisbane for the dinner.* At the following committee meeting, Air Commodore Kingwell, then commanding RAAF Amberley, offered to provide transport from the airport to the Club for this most important guest of honour. The evening was a splendid success, with a capacity crowd.

About the same time the Club entertained the Governor-General, Sir Paul Hasluck. With the Governor-General was his army aide-de-camp, the young infantry captain and Vietnam veteran Guy Montague Bagot, later to return to the Club as its secretary and manager in 1985 after a distinguished army career. This, too, was a capacity house and was thought then by some committee members to be first time in its history the Club had entertained a Governor-General, although a distinguished Federal politician who subsequently became Governor-General, Sir Richard (later Lord) Casey had been a guest of the Club. The memories of the committee were short; this was not the case; before World War II, Governors-General were frequently guests at balls and other similarly important occasions.

* * *

By the middle of 1971, it was clear that the Club's profitability was beginning to suffer. Views on the cause of this decline differed: an increase in the cost of goods and services used by the Club, in particular wages; declining patronage because of poor service. At a meeting on 29 April, 1971, the financial position was thoroughly discussed. There seemed no alternative to the Club's predicament than an increase in subscriptions, a move that no incumbent committee approaches with much satisfaction. In the process of researching a possible subscriptions increase, some figures were extracted on the relationship between membership and profit. Membership of the United Service Club reached an early peak in 1956 at 2932. Then, little more than a decade after the Second World War, membership began to

*This took some negotiating. In those comfortable days of the two-airline policy, both airlines agreed that they would issue no free tickets. An exception to this rule was made for Williams.

decline until 1969. The figures also revealed, however, that there was little real correlation between membership numbers and a fee increase. On the two occasions since the war that fees had been increased - in 1960 and 1966 - membership the following year showed little falling off. Still, the president, Wing Commander Olive, could write in the 1971 annual report:

It has been a satisfactory year from the point of view of membership retention and extension, as the figures show only a drop of four members, which is more than catered for by natural causes, and it is very pleasing to see once again an increase in the 'under 25' group. Reduction of membership figures, due to an increase in subscriptions, is not reflected in the year under review, but as this report goes to Press, it can be seen that the year ahead will be extremely difficult, as the traditionally large number of resignations that accompany a subscription increase is already evident.

The early 1970s were also a difficult period for business, not just the Club. Although Australia was yet to experience the worst of the wage inflation that came in the period between 1972 and 1975, already there were shocks in the international economic system resulting from the United States' involvement in Vietnam and the huge effect that war was having on inflation in that country. A meeting on 15 July 1971 wrestled with the problem of declining use of the Club, worries about the Club's future, redevelopment proposals which would, if accepted, change fundamentally the nature of the Club and continuing competition from other interests. One proposal which the committee examined briefly was a joint arrangement with the Brisbane Club of locating both organisations in the same building. But there were other, more fundamental problems that needed to be corrected by the committee.

[The President] then stated that our standard of catering was poor and advised the meeting that the secretary had been directed to endeavour to correct this. The secretary had been advised that he is the manager and could implement committee policy and would have full authority of the committee.

There seems little doubt that the standard of the catering in the Club was less than splendid. It had been the subject of complaints by members in informal approaches to committee members; the topic also had been raised by a well-known Club member, Major Peter Henderson, at the previous year's general meeting. Only some months before had the question of steaks arisen during a committee meeting; apparently the catering staff were having difficulties in identifying rare, medium and well-done steaks to the satisfaction of members. After much deliberation, the committee decided that the steaks should carry appropriate flags showing the degree of cooking to which they had been subjected. If this is any indication of the sophistication of Club catering at the time, then it is little wonder that dining room

patronage was declining. The early 1970s saw the beginning of a restaurant boom in Brisbane, particularly in the cheap ‘bring your own liquor’ establishments. Changes to the licensing laws made it possible for these restaurants to open without elaborate lavatory and washroom facilities and the pattern of eating-out in Brisbane began to change. As well, too, motel chains such as the Park Royal and the Travelodge were offering quite sophisticated meals in their dining rooms; at the time, the United Service Club would have had difficulty attracting and holding dining room patrons even if it could get its steaks right!

But there was another fundamental problem in the Club: Was the secretary a secretary, or indeed a secretary manager? The minutes for this meeting suggest that a problem already had arisen and that the secretary, Lieutenant Colonel Aley, saw himself as a manager, implementing Club policy on behalf of the committee. This, however, was not how some of the committee members saw it, although after some discussion it was agreed that the secretary would carry out the duties of a secretary/manager.

Running through this period of the late 1960s- early 1970s is a distinct feeling that, perhaps, the Club was occupying premises that had become too large for modern day use. Social habits had changed; drink-driving was a very serious offence and one, thanks to modern technology, which was increasingly easy to detect. Club members, being respectable members of the community, in no way wanted to test the proficiency of the police in detecting this crime. Perhaps the Club was interested in selling some of its property? If so, there were members who might easily have been potential buyers.

It would be churlish and unfair to suggest that these members sensed that they might have done well out of the deal. However, the minutes for the period seem almost indignant in putting down any suggestion that the Club’s property be sold. ‘A question was asked on how the possibility of the Club property being sold had been publicised and in answer the President stated that a number of members had been inquiring about the future policy of the Club.’ There is some sensitivity in the way these words were carefully phrased.

But it is clear that the committee was pursuing all avenues of improving the Club’s performance. As Wing Commander Olive said in the 1971 annual report:

a great number of World War II officers who were eligible at the time, did not join the Club after the war. Most frequent reasons were inability to use the Club as they were busy on rehabilitation courses, raising young families and their financial position could not justify the expense. In many cases they are now phasing out of the high cost area of growing families and with the prospect of more time and less pressure on their hip pocket nerves, could find the Club eminently to their taste. Membeprs should consider people in their own circles who are in this category and make a drive to recruit more members.

As a temporary measure the Committee looked at the possibility of allowing members to pay their fees on a half-yearly basis. This idea had been examined on a fairly frequent basis and decided against because of the administrative and other costs involved. Still, it was a reasonable suggestion. Finally the committee decided on a concerted membership drive through the columns of UNISER and with existing members. As the president pleaded in the annual report:

Present experience indicates that we could easily accommodate twice the current membership, as we believe only one person in five or six who is eligible, has joined since the war, a determined recruiting effort by every member could do wonders for the Club. This is over to you all.

The Club after Vietnam

By the middle of 1972, Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War had virtually ended. The last infantry battalions had returned home earlier in the year; logistics troops were packing up and leaving; in Australia the numbers of young men being conscripted were reduced and their term had been shortened from two years to 18 months; public support for the war was almost non-existent; everywhere, the military seemed to be on the defensive. Although the heyday of the huge moratorium marches had passed, protest was by no means a thing of the past, the peace and anti-war movement - if such a disparate coalition of protest groups can be so described - seemed to be in the ascendant.

In Canberra the Liberal Government led by William McMahon - after a short experiment with John Grey Gorton - looked to be in serious trouble; relations with the United States were the differing approaches to the war in Vietnam; some American politicians and service officers thought that Australia had wound down its Vietnam involvement with rather too much haste. In the media, in the schools and universities, even in the public service, there were strong feelings against the war in Vietnam and against all matters military. Forced to bear the brunt of an unpopular war, the military seemed to retreat into a shell.* This anti-war, anti-Vietnam veteran feeling permeated many aspects of society, even going so far as to affect the United Service Club.

The Club had usually invited a senior serving American officer as a guest during the celebrations to mark the battle of the Coral Sea in May, 1942. In May 1972, however, the Australian-American Association reported to the Club that the Coral Sea visitor this year would not be a serving officer but the Embassy's Head of Mission in Canberra. This gentleman had only a limited time in Brisbane and the only time available would have been at 4.30 p.m. on a Wednesday afternoon. Clearly this was unsuitable; the Club had been in the habit of hosting a lunch which was very popular with members. As a result, 1972 did not see a Coral Sea Visitor to the Club or a lunch.

Unlike World War II, Vietnam did not produce a sudden rush of veterans who joined as members. Ironically, many of the new members who did join during the Vietnam years - 1962 to 1972-were members of the Citizens Military Forces and used that form of service as an alternative to conscription for two years with the possibility of a year's active service in Vietnam. The Vietnam veterans who were members of the

*Even going so far as to prevent soldiers going on leave in uniform.

Club tended to be professional soldiers who had joined while serving in Brisbane. At the time of writing, the Club has had two presidents who served in Vietnam as regular officers - Brigadier Lee Greville* and Major-General William 'Digger' James - as well as former Citizens Military Force officers such as Brigadier 'Sam' Harrison, Colonel Vern Mullins and Brigadier Colin Wilson, who were among the many who visited the Australian Task Force in Phuoc Tuy province for two week periods as part of their duties. However, relatively few national servicemen who were commissioned through the Army's Officer Training Unit** at Scheyville, near Windsor in Sydney have joined the Club.

Like the campaigns in Malaya and Borneo and, to a lesser extent, Korea, Vietnam was a war fought by professional soldiers. Many former professional soldiers joined during membership drives in the early 1980s, but few of the young men who spent eighteen months or so of their lives as national service officers during Vietnam were attracted to the Club. Certainly some joined, but found that the more sedate atmosphere was not to their liking. In at least one case, a former national service officer clashed with a Club secretary and had, in the vernacular, a 'full and free exchange of views'. The young man, now prominent in Brisbane business life, subsequently resigned his membership. It remains a challenge for future committees to attract as members a proportion of the 1500 or so men, now in their forties, who were commissioned at Scheyville during conscription for Vietnam.

* * *

In the 1970s, while the Club's committee was wrestling with important issues such as declining patronage, it also found time for the other, smaller, but no less important decisions that go towards making up a successful and well-run club. Memorabilia and insignia, for example. The Club's cuff-links, still a popular item with members, date from the early 1970s. The suggestion that the Club purchase cuff links with the crest on them had been around for some time. At a meeting of the house and finance sub-committee on 25 May, 1972, Flight Lieutenant Adams said he had investigated the cost of production. A two-colour set would cost about \$1.50. The meeting endorsed the idea and also decided to investigate the possibility of buying tie-bars with the matching crest. At various times in its past, the Club has offered blazer pockets, blazer buttons and, of course, Club ties. Sadly, blazer badges and

*Brigadier Greville DSO commanded the 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment on its first tour in 1968-69; Major General James AO, MBE, MC commanded 8th Field Ambulance in 1968. And, of course, a Vietnam veteran in the secretary and manager, Lieutenant Colonel Guy Bagot LVO.

**Among the former national service officers who have joined are Lieutenant Geoff Colless, a committee member from 1980 to the present and Second Lieutenant Bob Minnikin, who has been a driving force behind the Commonwealth Games, Expo and now the Gold Coast Indy.

buttons have lost their popularity, under joint pressures of changing fashions and costs, but the distinctive Club tie remains a popular item. With the restoration of the simple blue blazer or reefer jacket as a fashion item, it is time perhaps for the Club committee to investigate the purchase of distinctive Club buttons.

* * *

Certainly the financial pressures of the early 1970s forced the committee to look at methods of saving money. The Club was using a commercial laundry for sheets, etc and it was thought that a church laundry, very possibly the Holy Cross Laundry at Wooloowin, would charge a lower price than a commercial operation. Although several church laundries were approached, only one bothered to reply and its prices were comparable with the Club's commercial laundry. Every cent counted; savings were important in all areas of operations.

During this period, too, the Club's property continued to attract interest of potential developers. In May 1972, the Club had an approach from Westfield (Indooroopilly) Pty Ltd, indicating that they were interested in buying the property. The president, Wing Commander Olive, also told the May committee meeting that he had been also approached by Civil & Civic Pty Ltd. This company wanted to buy the Wickham Terrace site and provide the Club with a strata title facilities in some new, unspecified location. By now, the committee was well aware of the attractiveness of the Wickham Terrace site to potential developers and the need to be careful when considering prospective development proposals.

At this committee meeting, Lieutenant Colonels Wilson and Harrison, both men with wide business experience, urged caution; the prospective developers were invited to address the committee. These meetings were held over a series of months, but without any conclusive results. As well, the July 1972 minutes note that the Club was trying to arrange a meeting with the State Minister for Housing and the council architect. Wing Commander Olive told the meeting that he had taken no action on the suggestion because of the impending State elections. This meeting was to discuss the plans prepared by the State Government Insurance Office to redevelop the Central Railway Station site. These plans would have had a direct impact on any possible change of use to its site.

By the end of July that year the Club president was telling the committee that he had tried to arrange a meeting of Government and Brisbane City Council officials to clarify the situation on any future development of the site but had been unable to do so. In the meantime, the Club had yet another developer interested in the site. In many ways the early 1970s saw the beginning of the expansion of what we now know as Brisbane's Central Business District. The late 1960s-early-1970s had seen the construction of such buildings as the MMI and the T&G in Queen Street and the

SGIO Building, just below the Club in Turbot Street. As the business district expanded, the Club's property became more attractive to would-be developers.

Administratively the Club might have been well placed to deal with the plethora of development proposals that appeared briefly, at least according to the minutes, and then disappeared, never to be heard of again. Of course, any development proposal would have had to pass through several stages within the Club itself before it could be put to members. But minutes of a special committee meeting in August 1972 demonstrate the procedural steps which needed to be taken and, by a careful reading between the lines, indicate the reservations which many, perhaps most, committee members had about the kind of redevelopment proposals which were being put forward at the time.

This meeting had been called to examine various offers which had been made for the Club property. Wing Commander Olive told the meeting that committee should first examine whether any move should be made at all. That was an important question and one which has been central to redevelopment proposals for nearly three decades. Olive then told the meeting of the steps that had been taken by both the Naval and Military Club in Melbourne and the Imperial Service Club in Sydney. In both cases, he said, special sub-committees had been formed to analyse the position; these had presented reports to a special general meeting of members for their consideration. After outlining the procedures which he thought should be followed, Olive then told the meeting of the approaches then current: An offer by Security Projects Pty Ltd, the Westfield subsidiary. This company had inspected the Club, before making a proposition and now was pressing for a reply. The other interested party was the major developer Civil & Civic. According to the President, this company had inspected the site and expressed a general interest in acquiring it but had not gone any further. Civil and Civic's idea was to acquire the Club's property and offer it premises over the Central Railway Station in a building yet to be built.

In effect, four choices were available to the committee at this stage. First, to buy a new building in place of the existing premises on Wickham Terrace. This was estimated to cost \$900,000 without furnishings, carpeting and equipment. Even by 1972 standards, this figure seems remarkably low and certainly some committee members at the time favoured this course. Had this option been followed, however, the Club would have had to sell the existing premises; apparently there was no shortage of potential purchasers.

The second option was to move to the proposed premises above Central Station, which was only a minor variation of the first offer. The third plan, that proposed by Westfield, involved building a new Club with a frontage to Upper Edward Street. This proposal had much merit, according to some committee members who could see a smaller club, with parking space retained - thus leading to a better use of resources to fit a declining membership at that time. This would probably be the better plan

in terms of financial conditions. Finally the committee could opt for a complete facelift of the Club, estimated to cost about \$120,000. With existing interest rates a debt of this size borrowed from a finance company would cost about \$13,000 a year to service. In turn this would require both an increase in membership and in trading to service this debt; Wing Commander Olive said he did not think this was likely. These doubts were shared by other committee members.

As well, Anzac House next door was likely to come onto the market. Could the Club make use of this? Again every committee member seemed to have a strong preference. After 90 minutes of solid discussions, Air Commodore Deryck Kingwell moved that any further development or alteration to the Club take place in the present vicinity. And that, for the time being at least, was an end to that. A month later, a special sub-committee was formed to investigate the proposals for redevelopment being put forward. But without any real driving interest on the part of committee members to see the Club move, the deliberations of this sub-committee were to prove once more that members were very happy where they were and could not see the advantage in changing, just for the sake of change.

Indeed, this was precisely the outcome of the sub-committee's efforts. It was decided that the Club should stay put for five years, after which time the proposals would be re-examined in light of what had happened to other buildings in the vicinity. It seems no coincidence that this sub-committee was chaired by Lieutenant Colonel Little and included two senior committee members of sound commercial judgments, Lieutenant Colonels Cameron and Harrison, as well as the lawyer and former Club president, Brigadier McEachern. Air Commodore Kingwell's sensible advice and clear thinking also assisted this committee.

As Wing Commander Olive noted in that year's annual report: 'The committee recommended against the existing offer and further recommended the expenditure of up to \$100,000 for up to five years after which an attractive redevelopment offer should be readily available. I believe this is the right decision but it is the prerogative of a general meeting to review this if members are not in agreement with it.' At the annual general meeting, Wing Commander Olive repeated the remarks he made in the annual report, and added his view that the Club should retain ownership of the property on Wickham Terrace, whether it moved or not. Judging from the minutes, that view was largely supported from the floor of the meeting although Major Peter Henderson questioned the recommendation to spend money. He thought that any money spent should be applied first to the improvement of kitchen facilities and other expenditure should be closely watched. But apart from several speakers from the floor, each concerned with getting the best possible value from the \$100,000 to be spent, the members seemed content that their Club was being run efficiently and well.

The enthusiasm for redevelopment was always greater on the part of the prospective

developers than among members of the committee; this 1971 decision to postpone any plans for at least five years was to prove extremely valuable. The continued interest of property developers in the site merely served to underline, once again, the wisdom of Little's original efforts to move the Club from George Street after World War II even though the not-so-gentle slope of the terrain up Edward Street was proving an impediment to ageing limbs and lungs.

The decision not to accept any redevelopment proposals proved to be extremely wise. In December 1972, the Whitlam Labor Government was elected. Economic and other decisions made by this Government, the first Labor Government to hold office since 1949, led to huge increases in inflation. The Club's trading position suffered severely, not just from the changed economic and political climate, but also a quite different attitude towards drinking in the community. Certainly increased wage and salary charges now made it impossible for the Club to justify remaining open over holiday periods. It was during this time that the Club began closing over the Easter break and also over Queen's Birthday weekend.

However, it was not long before the Club began, once again, to look at the question of redevelopment, despite the decision to postpone plans for five years. Rising costs and reduced trading had made it difficult, if not impossible, to justify spending the proposed \$100,000. Anzac House was on the market and many committee members thought the Club's existing, and perhaps sub-standard, accommodation could be improved by the purchase of the building.

From the beginning of 1973, the committee was worried about declining bar trading results. Indeed, at the 31 January meeting in 1973, soon after the annual meeting, members were beginning to doubt whether it was prudent to spent \$100,000 on the Club. The Top Bar, in particular, had been trading very quietly and one suggestion was that it should be closed, and a bar opened instead in the Green House. The Dining Room was still closed to ladies at lunch time, a factor which affected trade but perhaps not so greatly as to make a major difference. The house and finance sub-committee thought that an independent survey of the Club's activities by an outside expert might be helpful, with one name suggested being that of Stan Webster, an executive with Carlton & United Breweries. A note in the minutes demonstrates the problem in a nutshell:

The statements of income and expenditure were examined and it was noted that returns from catering and rent were considerably lower than those for the corresponding month in 1972 and that expenditure was significantly higher in both catering and administration....

A special committee meeting on 18 June examined, once again, the vexed question of redevelopment. Air Commodore Kingwell set out the problem which had not

changed dramatically since the late 1960s when membership peaked. The Club's membership potential was declining; usage of the Club, as a result, was diminishing. As well, costs were rising. This meeting, an important one in the history of the Club, lasted three hours. It is worth covering in some detail because it canvassed the problems faced by the Club and the difficulties posed by those problems.

Firstly, there was the difficulty with declining membership and use. Was it, as some members suggested, because the Club was in the 'wrong' position? Increasingly in the documents over this period are there references to the Wickham Terrace site being a deterrent to members using the Club. These minutes give a good example:

The President asked why members were not using the Club. In reply Lt Col (C D F) Wilson stated that our position was a deterrent and felt that the Club could find it increasingly difficult to attract members to come up to Wickham Terrace. It was his opinion that the Club should relocate either in the centre of the city or move right out of town. Lt Col (R I) Harrison suggested that the committee should be able to present a general meeting with a concrete proposal including a suggested relocation site. He stated that our present site was badly situated as it was out of the reach of the average member. It was his opinion that our membership was becoming ever-increasingly older and felt that the Club should be relocated in the city with a reduced parking area.

It is interesting that these concerns only began to arise in the mid-1960s when, of course, the great bulk of post World War II members were now 20 years older. By the early 1970s, a decade or so later, the concerns are quite pressing, although not all the committee members felt the same way as 'Sam' Harrison and Colin Wilson. Flight Lieutenant Jock Tuckfield, for example, was adamant that the site did not inhibit members from using the Club. However, the meeting seemed to agree that the building was 'obsolescent' and a new one was desirable. But where? On the Spring Hill site? By buying and using Anzac House? The Anzac House proposal was put and lost on a show of hands.

The committee decided that the Club should remain on the present site and approach a panel of developers 'for a proposal to provide the Club with appropriate facilities including accommodation and car parking to the Club's specifications on this site with the provision that the Club move only once'. This was an important decision because now, it seemed, the impetus for redevelopment was coming from within the Club. The committee charged with developing this proposal consisted of Group Captain P R Smith as chairman, Lieutenant Colonel Harrison, Captain Kempthorne, Lieutenant Colonel Vern Mullins and Lieutenant T C Thynne.

One of the difficulties facing the Club during the redevelopment considerations was disposal of the existing premises as part of the transition stage. The difficulty was in selling the premises; a meeting of the house and finance sub-committee in October 1973 considered advice from the Club's solicitors against selling by tender.

The letter, written by Club member, Major Peter Henderson, survives and includes the following paragraph:

We have considered the transaction entered into by the Imperial Service Club in Sydney. The Imperial Service Club formed a company which purchased the site and leased it to a developer for a term of 125 years. The developer in turn sub-leased part of the new project to the Club at a rental which far exceeded the head rental. No cash transaction was received by the Club. This type of transaction is wholly inappropriate to the requirements of this Club.

Peter Henderson's advice was well considered and well-founded. It was precisely this kind of arrangement which helped the demise of the Imperial Service Club in 1985. Henderson recommended against the proposal to offer the property by tender on a pre-determined contract at the present stage. The matter should be left open for negotiation, when the Club would have a full choice of any practical and legal alternatives offering. Henderson also recommended that the Club should obtain, by independent valuation, specific information including the sale value of the whole property, the purchase price of 20,000 square feet of strata title at the relevant time in the future and rental as at this time.

The early 1970s were not good years for the Club. Although it enjoyed a strong committee, with talented members, the Club seemed to lack some of the drive of earlier years. It was, too, a difficult period economically and politically; the first of the oil price increases, as well as continued high inflation in the United States, produced difficult economic conditions. Typical of the committee meetings of this period was one held on 4 June 1973. The outlook seemed decidedly gloomy, judging from the minutes. First, the membership sub-committee reported that there had been a decrease in members under 25. Then, the sports and social sub-committee noted that a planned steak night* had been cancelled, although one committee member thought that once an event had been announced, it should be held 'irrespective of acceptances', not a particularly popular view. The meeting spent some time examining why members were not coming to the announced and planned functions. Was the Club holding too many functions? That seemed unlikely; the social program for the year was not particularly onerous.

At this meeting, the momentous decision to allow ladies into the dining room at lunchtime was taken, almost certainly under the pressure of saving costs rather than making a statement of about equality of the sexes.

*The steak night was the idea of Lieutenant Colonel Rod Fay, a committee member who knew his food and wine and who enjoyed both immensely. Murray Adams recalls that Fay's culinary ideas were excellent but perhaps too advanced for some members at the time.

Air Commodore Kingwell* had been elected president at the 1971 annual general meeting. In July the previous year, he had retired as air officer commanding, RAAF Amberley and was then the official secretary to the Governor, (and old RAAF colleague) Air Marshal Sir Colin Hannah. Kingwell thought that, after his retirement from the RAAF he would have sufficient time to devote to the duties of president. This proved not to be the case. In the 1973 annual report, Kingwell wrote:

I know it has been customary for the president to nominate for a second year of office but I do not intend to do this. The club is going through difficult times and requires all office bearers to give a lot of their time to discussing club matters and also to have time to think, study and plan for the benefit of the club. Unfortunately I have not had time to do this during the past year and cannot see it becoming available in the near future. This is the main reason why I shall not be standing for re-election together with the fact that I want to see younger men on the committee and at the helm of our club.

Apart from Brigadier Murray Brown in 1985, Kingwell was the only Club president in recent times not to have stood for a second term of office. However, the decision was based on Kingwell's keen appreciation of what was needed for the job and of his own, onerous responsibilities at Government House. Certainly his decision had nothing to do with the minor tensions over the redevelopment proposals.

The 1973 annual general meeting attracted 59 members, including the president. This was a small number, particularly considering the importance issue to discuss: the possible disposal of the Club's premises. Lieutenant Colonel Little sent his apologies. This meeting endorsed the proposition that the committee investigate proposals for the redevelopment of the Club site and rehousing of the Club. The mood of the meeting, although attended by relatively few members, was unmistakable. The members wanted to remain where they were, on the hill, and despite the walk up the hill. Still the committee explored all the possible options.

One developer approached by the Club at this time was the Brisbane builder, K D Morris & Sons Pty Ltd. Still run by its principal and founder Keith Morris, this company had built the nearby SGIO - now Suncorp - Building and had, at the time, a considerable reputation for construction and development. K D Morris & Sons undertook a feasibility study which including leasing the Club's site to the developer on a long-term basis; the developer constructing a high rise building on that site and

*On Anzac Day, 1971, Deryck Kingwell, hosted the usual luncheon for the heads of the three services at the Club. During lunch, he took his medals and ribbons from his service dress jacket and asked a steward to place them in his cap. A merchant sailor wandered in off the street, took the medals and sported them around town. According to an entertaining report in the *Sydney Sun*, Kingwell had some qualms about reporting the loss of his medals, particularly the DSO, to the Queen. He saw himself saying something like: 'Listen, Ma'am, someone's pinched my DSO. How about another one?' Fortunately the medals were recovered by the police, although the ribbons were grimy.

the Club's leasing back the top floor at a lower rental than that paid by the developer as ground rent. It was this third condition which was ignored by the Imperial Service Club in Sydney and which had helped to bring it down.

At the beginning the company was confident it could meet the conditions. However, the disastrous 1974 floods intervened; K D Morris's office was engulfed and the company was forced to seek an extension of time in which to make its investigations. The company did not meet the Club's requirements. Originally the committee had decided that it wanted to occupy the top floors, it wanted to continue to own the land and it wanted a return of income in the form of the rental differential. K D Morris could not, or would not, match these agreements, despite a second attempt. The Club looked elsewhere. As Group Captain Smith noted in the annual report:

Subsequently, negotiations were commenced in other quarters and a feasibility study, at no cost to the club, is presently being undertaken by a firm of Sydney architects on behalf of a client developer who is prepared to deal on our terms. It is only fair to alert members, however, to the hampering effect that the Central Railway Station site is having on proposals for our site particularly as part of that development is for an international hotel, one of the possible uses to which our site is suited.

As it happens, an international hotel, the Sheraton, was built on the Central Railway Station and, at the time of writing, the Club remains in the same premises, but rather more solvent than many of the developers, including K D Morris, which were interested in the site. It seems that the combination of a slow, at-times unwieldy Club bureaucracy, the innate caution of many committee members and some extraordinary circumstances, have prevented the Club being redeveloped. And that may be no bad thing.