



Lieutenant Colonel Sir Donald CAMERON KCMG, DSO, VD

[1879– 1960]



Donald Charles Cameron was born on 19 November 1879 in Brisbane, son of John Cameron and his wife Sarah Annie, née Lodge. His father was born in British Guiana, his mother in New South Wales. He was educated at Toowoomba and Brisbane Grammar schools and at 18 became a clerk in the Queensland Meat Export and Agency Co., of which his father was chairman of directors.

In 1899 Cameron went on a tour of Europe and Asia. He was in China during the Boxer Rebellion and after attaching himself to an American infantry regiment which had been dispatched from Manila, accompanied it to Peking.

He returned to Australia in 1901, volunteered for service in the South African War, and on 19 March was commissioned Lieutenant in the 6th (Queensland Imperial Bushmen) Contingent. He reached

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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Cape Town in May and for the next year participated in patrolling and mopping-up operations in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony. On 16 June he risked his life to rescue a wounded trooper and was mentioned in dispatches. His unit was disbanded in June 1902.

In 1902-14 Cameron, with his brothers, managed the family property, Kensington Downs, near Longreach, and was involved in their associated pastoral and other business activities. He visited Europe and the United States of America in 1903.

On 18 February 1914 he married Evelyn Stella Jardine, granddaughter of John Jardine, at St John's Anglican Cathedral, Brisbane, and soon afterwards toured China and Japan; he had just returned home when World War I broke out.

He enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force on 30 September and was appointed Captain in the 7th Light Horse Regiment; on 17 November he transferred to the 5th LHR and embarked for Egypt in December as second-in-command of 'C' Squadron. From 20 May 1915 until the evacuation his regiment fought as infantry at Gallipoli. Cameron was wounded on 9 June and again, quite severely, on 28 June in the heroic but fruitless attack on Turkish trenches known as the Balkan Gun Pits. This wound was to trouble him for the rest of his life as removal of the bullet which had entered just below his ribs was considered too hazardous.

Cameron was promoted Major on 9 September and re-joined his unit in Egypt on 3 January 1916. After serving in the Suez Canal zone he crossed into Sinai in April and for the next ten months commanded his squadron in numerous patrols and skirmishes; he fought in the battle of Romani on 4-5 August.

In February 1917 the light horse advanced into Palestine and took part in the battles of Gaza and in operations and patrols in the Wady Ghuzze. Cameron was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel on 30 October and took command of the regiment which, on the next day, he led in the attack on Beersheba, and the subsequent advance on Jerusalem.

In the early months of 1918 he went to England on leave, returning in April to resume command for the offensives against the retreating Turks which ended in their capitulation at Ziza on 30 October. Here Cameron was faced with the task of protecting the enemy force from Allied Bedouin troops while he arranged the surrender. For service in the Palestine campaign he was mentioned in dispatches three times, appointed CMG, awarded the Distinguished Service Order and the Order of the Nile. He commanded the 14th LHR in 1921-24.

He was an able commanding officer with a gift for obtaining 'machine-like discipline' from his men without having to demand it; morale in his regiment was always high. The writer Ion Idriess, who served under him, remembered him as 'a nuggety chap, not very tall, with a rugged face that [broke] easily into a smile'; in action he was 'never flustered' and was a 'cool but a quick thinker'.

After demobilization Cameron returned to Kensington Downs and in 1919-31 represented Brisbane for the National Party in the House of Representatives. Ill health forced his retirement, but he was Nationalist member for Lilley in 1934-37; he contested the Senate election in 1937 but was defeated. As a parliamentarian he represented Australia at the League of Nations Assembly in 1923 and sat on the joint select committee on Commonwealth electoral law and procedure in 1926-27.

A tireless worker, he always had the interests of ex-servicemen at heart; and in parliament was a leading spokesman for the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia. When a history of the 5th LHR was printed in 1926, he paid the publishing costs and presented a copy to every member of the regiment. He was president or patron of many social organizations and hospitaller and almoner of the Order of St John in Australia. He was appointed KCMG in 1932. In

World War II he served as chairman of the New South Wales recruiting drive committee for the Royal Australian Air Force.

After the war Cameron lived in retirement in Sydney and Brisbane and towards the end of his life he and his wife were hospitalized in Brisbane; she predeceased him, as did their only daughter. He died on 19 November 1960 (his 81st birthday) and was cremated with Presbyterian forms. In accordance with his wishes his ashes were buried near the grave of his grandfather in the family cemetery on Home Creek station near Barcaldine. His estate was sworn for probate at £2382.

AROUND THE CLUB

When the lift doors open at Level 2, Members and guests arriving at the Club find themselves under the gaze of a bust presented to the Club in 1967 by former members of the 5th Light Horse.



The bust commemorates long-time Club member Sir Donald Cameron KCMG, DSO, VD, Order of Nile.

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
- S. W. Wigzell, 'Cameron, Sir Donald Charles (1879–1960)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cameron-sir-donald-charles-5473/text9301>, published first in hardcopy 1979, accessed online 18 September 2018.