



Lieutenant W.J.E. WEST

[1905 – 1975]



Lieutenant West was the Secretary of the Club from 1957 to 1958.

William John Edward “Bill” West was born on 11 December 1905 in Catford, London. He was the son of William Joseph West [1865-1952] - born in Deptford, London; a carpenter, he came from England in 1911 with his young family and lived at Newmarket, Brisbane. He died visiting his daughter Helen in Bundaberg.

In 1885 he had married Harriett (née King) [1866-1916] She was also born in Deptford, London, and died in Toowong, Brisbane. William’s siblings (all born in London) were:

- Harriett [1884] Died as an infant.
- Hannah Elizabeth Jane [1886-1964] Married Percy Arthur Whitear [1876-1965] in Brisbane in 1921. Died in Brisbane.
- Mabel (“Cissie”) [1889-1957] A post office worker who remained in England. Married Charles Robert Loder [1891-1963]. Had two daughters. Died in Winchester.

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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- Harriett [1892-1975] Married William Joseph Curtis [1893-1951] in Brisbane in 1915. Had two daughters and a son. Died in Brisbane.
- William [1895-1905] Died in childhood
- Joseph [1896-1972] Married Emily (née Squire) [1899-1983] in Brisbane in 1925. Served World War 1 1916-19 as a Driver in 11 Field Artillery Brigade in France. Acting Sergeant in RAAOC in Brisbane 1940-42. Died in Brisbane.
- Helen [1898-1903] Died in childhood
- George Alfred [1904-1947] Married Zillah Constance Mary (née Dopson) [1905-1994] in Brisbane in 1932. They had a son and a daughter. Died in Brisbane
- Helen Irene [1909-1992] Married Lionel Mitchell Powell [1914-1967] of Bundaberg in 1937. They had a daughter and a son. Died in Brisbane.

It appears that Bill West never married.

Bill West was appointed Assistant Purser on T.S.S *Canberra* in July 1936 – he was previously the Paymaster for Howard Smith Shipping Brisbane. He was appointed Purser in March 1937. He was still serving on *Canberra* in 1946.

T.S.S *Canberra* was built in 1912 in Scotland and was part of the Howard Smith fleet that serviced the Australian coastal cruise and shipping trade. She carried over 400 passengers in three classes. During both World Wars she served as a troopship (mainly to New Guinea in Second World War) and was sold in 1947.



T.S.S *Canberra*

By 1952 he was Purser on M.V. *Kanimbla*.

M.V. *Kanimbla* was launched in 1935 in Belfast – for the Australian shipping line McIlwraith McEachern. Her regular voyages were from Fremantle around the coast to Cairns. She carried 450 passengers in two classes. During the Second World War she served as an armed merchant cruiser and had an active and distinguished war in the Far East as both HMS *Kanimbla* and later as HMAS *Kanimbla*. The ship's complement was drawn almost entirely from the Royal Australian Navy - including Australian reservists. After a comprehensive refit she returned to civilian service in 1950 and was sold in 1960.



M.V. Kanimbla

Records are imprecise as to exactly when Bill served on these two vessels and his service status. There is a file suggesting that he sought wartime service medals to which his time on *Canberra* would have entitled him. His Merchant Marine / Naval Reserve records cannot be located – however a purser would have held the equivalent rank of a naval Lieutenant – without the postnominals RAN / RANR / RANVR.

His appointment as Secretary of the Club in 1957 is noteworthy on two counts – he was the first to hold that position with a relevant professional background (a ship's purser is the officer responsible for all administration and supply; and usually the cooks and stewards); and the first to not hold a commission in the armed forces.

Lieutenant West died in Brisbane on 8 February 1975.

During his tenure, Lieutenant West served Presidents MacMinn and Christensen.

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
- Trove
- TSS Canberra <http://ssmaritime.com/TSS-Canberra.htm>
- Kanimbla <http://ssmaritime.com/Kanimbla-Oriental-Queen.htm>