



## Brigadier M J BROWN MC, ED

[1919 – 1998)



### Brigadier Brown was President of the Club in 1985

Murray James Brown was born in Adelaide on 2 June 1919, the son of Mr & Mrs A. Brown.

On 2 October 1944 Murray married Geraldine Esme (nee Acworth) (born 21 Nov 1920 at Julia Creek). Geraldine lived at South Brisbane in 1943; and the Brown family made its home successively in Toowong, Coorparoo, and Holland Park.

Murray and Geraldine had two sons – Mitchell James (born 1945) and Roger.

*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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Brigadier Brown had a long and varied military career. He enlisted in the Army in South Australia (No. 420993) and joined the AIF (SX1017) on 3 November 1939 at Woodside, SA - less than two weeks later was a Sergeant. He went to Officer Training Course (Southern Command) and on 21 June 1940 he was appointed Lieutenant. He was posted to the South Australian originated 2/10 Battalion (*The Adelaide Rifles*) which was sent to the United Kingdom and thence to the Middle East and North Africa. As part of 18 Brigade, 7<sup>th</sup> Division, the battalion took part in the Siege of Tobruk. It is reported that he celebrated his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday eating a sausage with a mate in a foxhole at Tobruk.

The battalion returned to Australia in March 1942 before being sent to New Guinea. In August 1942 he was a platoon commander at the defence of Milne Bay and was wounded in action in the face and right foot. After treatment and recuperation, he returned to 2/10 Battalion a month later and on 24 December 1942 he was promoted to Captain.

Captain Brown's Military Cross was awarded for his conspicuous gallantry in action at Buna Aerodrome at Christmas 1942. The Citation reads:

*"On 24th Dec '42, on the death of Capt. A.H. Ifould Capt. M.J. Brown took over command of B Coy 2/10 Aust. Infantry Bn. In the next 3 days the Coy advanced 700 yards and captured several strongly held positions, mainly due to his leadership and unflinching bearing under extremely heavy fire. At 2000 hours on 27 Dec. '42 a strong enemy force counter attacked our newly won positions on the right flank on Buna Strip and forced the remnants of our force to withdraw. Capt. Brown immediately organized a counterattack and personally led the attack over open ground and under heavy fire. He was twice wounded at the outset but carried on and eventually restored the line, inflicting 40 casualties on the enemy. The success of the attack was mainly due to his coolness, determination, and the inspiration of his outstanding personal courage. Not until the line was consolidated did Capt. Brown allow himself to be evacuated, very badly wounded."*

In a fortnight of fighting in heavy engagements around the disused Buna airstrip, where the Japanese had constructed several bunkers, the battalion suffered over 300 casualties, including 112 killed. Brown's wounds were so serious that he was evacuated to Sydney. It took him more than six months to recuperate. In September 1943 he was made Staff Captain of 7<sup>th</sup> Training Brigade and later became an intelligence officer in Queensland before returning to 2/10 Battalion in March 1944. In November 1944 he was appointed adjutant of the battalion. In May 1945, the battalion took part in the capture of Balikpapan and he was still present there when the Japanese surrendered in mid-August 1945.

He was Mentioned in Dispatches in June 1943 for "Exceptional services in the field in S.W.P. Area".<sup>1</sup>

In 1948, he joined the CMF. He is recorded as belonging to the Royal Australian Corps of Signals; however, it is uncertain when that corps transfer took place.

His career highlights in the CMF included;

- December 1950      Promotion to Major,
- December 1950      Promotion to Lt Colonel
- 1953 - 1956          Commanding Officer Queensland University Regiment  
[succeeding Club Life Member LTCOL Gus Gehrman]
- 1958 – 1960          Commander, Northern Command Signals Regiment
- April 1959 - 1962    Honorary Aide-de-Camp to the Governor-General of Australia  
(Field Marshall Viscount Slim, Viscount Dunrossil, Viscount De'Lisle)  
[succeeding Club Past President Brigadier Jack Amies OBE, ED]
- 1961                    Commander, Northern Command Troops
- February 1961        Promotion to Colonel
- February 1962        Promotion to Brigadier

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<sup>1</sup> Brown's actions at Milne Bay and later at Buna Airfield are mentioned in the Australian Official History 'South West Pacific Area - First Year - Kokoda to Wau' by Dudley McCarthy on pages 167, 169, 469-471 and 473-474.

- May 1969                      Honorary Aide-de-camp to Queen Elizabeth II
- December 1969              Chief of Staff (CMF) Northern Command

Murray was awarded the Efficiency Decoration in January 1961; and a First Clasp in 1971. He also received the Efficiency Medal in February 1948 – his eligibility being service as an NCO (and then as an Officer) for 6 years from Militia enlistment in 1939 (with war service counting double). This medal does not carry post-nominals.

On resigning from the Army in 1946 he studied to become a chartered accountant. He worked for a major accounting practice before establishing himself as Brown & Co. in the early 1950s. His office was in Queen Street, possibly in the Brisbane Permanent Building Society and Banking Co Ltd. building (a predecessor of the Bank of Queensland). Another sole practitioner (Lance Patrick & Co.) was on the same floor and the relationship developed to a merger as Brown Patrick & Co.- which developed as an audit, tax and insolvency practice.

In 1969 the firm moved to the Pearl Assurance Building on the corner of Queen and Eagle Streets. In 1976 the partners broke up and the firm became Brown Johnson Burns & Co. Murray had suffered from serious medical problems in 1977-78 and he finally retired from the practice in 1986. In 1988 the name changed again to Brown, Burns & Co. It merged in turn with the national insolvency firm Ferrier Hodgson in 1995.

Murray joined the Club in 1952. He had transferred his membership from the Naval, Military and Air Force Club in Adelaide. He was first elected to the Committee in 1981 and was Vice-President 1983-85. He was elected President in 1985, and contrary to established practice did not seek a second year as President. He did not serve as Immediate Past President. The reasons for this departure from tradition are not recorded, but may have been health related.

Brown was an innovator as President and brought his financial skills to bear. The investment fund was first foreshadowed to members in his 1986 report to members. At that time the committee was examining the possibility of capitalising entrance fees - *'this is a radical change which cannot be accomplished in one year, because entrance fees have been applied, traditionally, towards covering expenses of the Club, but this change, when fully implemented, will make a significant contribution to the investment fund. The aim of this fund was to provide capital reserves which would complement the Club's considerable fixed assets.'* In the 1991 accounts, the investment fund had reached nearly \$180,000.

Credit is also due Brigadier Brown for initiating the idea of a history to commemorate the centenary of the Club and to succeeding presidents, Brigadier Lee Greville, Flying Officer Alex Overett and Major General Digger James for their encouragement for the project.

Brigadier Brown died in Brisbane in 1998.

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
- Australian War Memorial <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C2089498>
- Trove
- Contribution from Mr Robert Burns – Club member and former business partner of Brigadier Brown.