



Major I. M. ANNAT MBE, OAM

[1930 – 2022]



Isobel Mary Annat was born on 18 March 1930 at Palmwoods, Queensland. She had a twin sister Ellen (Ellie) Madoline [1930 – 2020]. Their parents were James Whamond Annat [1892 – 1977], a fruit grower, and his wife Madoline Louisa (née Chambers), a former nurse, [1895 – 1980] who had married in 1921 and had an older son Donald James [1923 – 2014].

From childhood, Isobel was invariably known as “Pixie” (but apparently as “Miss Annat” by junior nurses!) – she was small of stature and always remembered as having a twinkle in her eye and a mischievous smile.

The family lived on a 16-hectare pineapple and small crop farm outside Palmwoods; and the children attended Palmwoods State School and Nambour State High School.

By early 1946, the family had moved to Brisbane – eventually settling into a home called “Blair” at 32 Bowser Street, Windsor at which Pixie lived for many years. She bought a house at Everton Hills in 1992, and in 2002 moved to an apartment in Kelvin Grove. She finally moved to a retirement home at Taigum. She also enjoyed a holiday residence at Golden Beach, Caloundra.

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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Annat commenced training as a nurse at Brisbane General Hospital in 1948. As a student nurse, she was active in the Student Nurses Unit (SNU) at the hospital and was president of the SNU from 1951 to 1952. In 1953 she completed her midwifery training at the Maroochy District Hospital in Nambour.

In June 1954, Pixie and her twin sister, Ellie, travelled by ship to London, where they lived and worked until early 1956. On her return to Australia, Pixie resumed her career as a nurse and was appointed Charge Sister of the Royal Brisbane Intermediate Wards for private patients.

She had rejoined the Royal Australian Nursing Federation (RANF) Queensland on returning to Australia and was a very active member of the Federation. In 1962, Annat accepted the position of assistant secretary and later secretary of RANF Queensland, where she was employed from 1962 to 1965.

Annat was St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital's longest-serving chief executive. Appointed Matron, later called Nursing Director, in 1965, she was Chief Executive Officer from 1978 to 1992. During her time at St Andrew's, Annat worked closely with the Hospital's Governing Board to raise money to advance the hospital's services. She helped launch one of the first neurosurgery units in 1979, the first nuclear medicine department at an Australian private hospital in 1983, and other improvements to medical and surgical practices. Working with cardiac specialists, Annat helped establish the St Andrew's Cardiac Investigation Unit and Catheter Laboratory which opened in 1984. The following year St Andrew's became the first private hospital in Queensland to perform open heart surgery.

Public recognition of her life was significant:

- 1977 awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, in recognition of service to nursing.
- 1992 awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, in recognition of service to nursing and nursing organisations.
- 2001 awarded the Australian Centenary Medal for service to community nursing and hospital advice.
- 2021 named by the State Government as a Queensland Great.

After her retirement from St Andrews Hospital in 1992, Annat turned her full attention to voluntary service. The more notable of her endeavours in this area were: -

She had been a member of the Centaur Memorial Fund for Nurses since 1975 and in 2000 she was appointed honorary secretary. She and her sister had been involved in the Centaur "Younger Set" and choir after the war – raising money for the Fund to purchase *Centaur House* in Queen Street in 1947, which became the centre for the nursing profession in Brisbane. The Fund was very well regarded and amongst other matters provided Fellowships for nurses to study for a Ph.D. She was always very involved in the Fund's annual *Centaur Memorial Services* (in both Brisbane and Caloundra) and was instrumental in organising the location of the wreck in 2009 and the dedication service at sea in 2010 (involving the Governor-General, the Queensland Governor, and the Prime Minister)

She served on the Board of St Luke's Nursing Service (later Anglicare) from 1992 to 2005, was a Director of TriCare Ltd from 1994 to 2001, chaired the St Luke's Ethics Committee from 1996–2005 and subsequently of its successor Spiritus Ethics Committee. She remained actively involved in Anglicare until 2017.

In 1998, she became honorary secretary of the Royal Brisbane Hospital's Nurses' Association Inc..

She served on the Lady Musgrave Trust Board for more than 20 years and was President from 2002 to 2014. Originally established in 1885 to shelter homeless women, the operations were transformed when Pixie joined the board to providing properties for housing “homeless” women which were serviced through an agreement with Anglicare, and later the Sisters of the Good Samaritan.

In 2007, she began serving as a volunteer at St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital. On 18 November 2014 she was awarded a Uniting Care Queensland Moderator's Medal for outstanding community service.

Pixie joined the Club in February 1977 Her proposer was Major A.V. Henry; and her nomination was seconded by Captain C.F. Beadle. She was an active member – helped by the Club being close to St. Andrew's Hospital, and it being a convenient place to hold meetings of the various bodies in which she was involved. She remained a member for over 40 years.

Her connection with military service and the Club ran through her family.

Her grandfather – Lieutenant John James Whamond Annat [1864 – 1900] – was a Club Member who was killed in the Boer War on 6 August 1900 at the Battle of Eland River while serving with 3rd Queensland Mounted Infantry. He had been born in Scotland and became a professional soldier in the British, Queensland and Australian defence forces and saw considerable action. He had also been a gold miner in the Charters Towers and Warwick districts. At his death, his widow Isabella (née Ferguson) [1865 – 1946] was left with five young children – including the eldest James Whamond (Pixie's father); and his siblings Annie Isobel Ferguson Falconer [1894 – 1980], David [1896 – 1952], Helen Spowart Turnbull [1898 – 1958], and Hector Baden Mafeking [1900 – 1974]. Her grandfather James' biography appears on the Club's website – under Club History - Honour Rolls - South African War.



LT J.W. Annat 3 Queensland Mounted Infantry 1900

Her father, James, served in 25th Battalion (Regimental Number 17) in Gallipoli and France in the First World War – as a Sergeant was twice wounded with gunshot wounds to the neck and face, and awarded the Military Medal, and was commissioned in late 1917. James served in the battalion with the brother of his wife-to-be - Lieutenant John Cyril Chambers M.M. - who died of self-inflicted gunshot wounds in a London hotel in late 1917.

Her brother Donald joined the RAAF through the Empire Air Training Scheme in 1943 and became a Flight Sergeant wireless operator. He served in Europe flying 26 sorties in Lancasters in 460 Squadron – which dropped the greatest tonnage of bombs and suffered the highest casualties of all RAAF squadrons in the War. In July 1944, his aircraft was shot down on a bombing raid over Courtrai, Belgium and he was presumed lost. However, on 11 September he was returned to the UK and repatriated to Australia in 1945 He then lived in Cairns and worked as an Air Traffic Controller.

Her uncle David served in Egypt and France in the First World War in the Medical Corps.

Her uncle Hector served as a Warrant Officer in the Army Instructional Corps in World War Two in Australia and New Guinea.

Pixie herself served in the Citizen Military Forces for almost a decade from 1957 and reached the rank of Major. She joined and was commissioned as a Captain in the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps in the then Citizen Military Forces (CMF). She served at the Water Street Depot (between Brunswick and Trinity Streets, Fortitude Valley), which was revamped in 1955 and became the base for several health associated CMF units and their training facilities.

Major "Pixie" Annat died in Brisbane on 24 September 2022.

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
- *Pixie Annat - Champion of Nurses* Colleen Clur; University of Queensland Press, 2015