



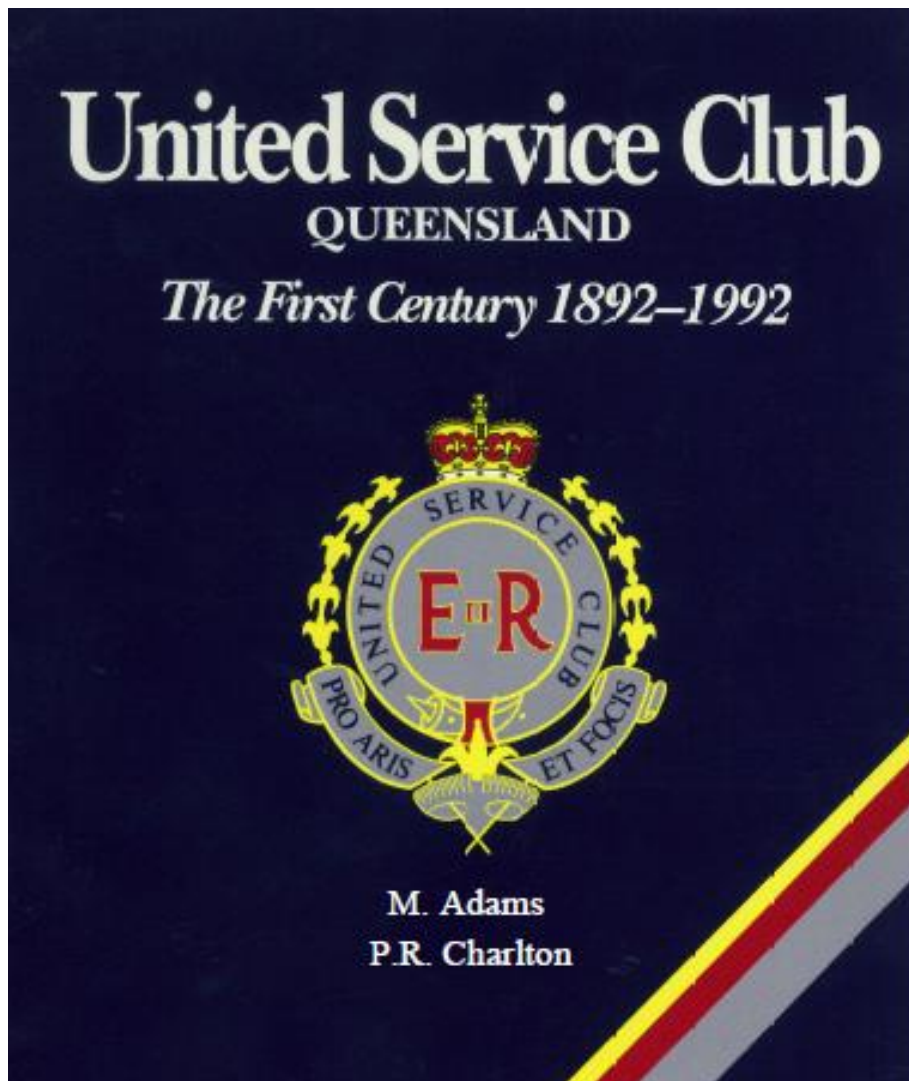
united service club

history & heritage notes

Club History 1892-1992

SECTION 3

(Chapters 7 to 10)



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.

Youthful Enthusiasms

In September 1949, the Club's secretary, Flight Lieutenant J B Riddall, had a melancholy tale to report to the committee. Members of the betting section of the vice squad of the Queensland police force had entered the premises on Saturday, 10 September and questioned a steward, one ED Linnan. As a result of this questioning, Linnan was later summonsed to appear in the Magistrates Court. Linnan was off duty on the Saturday afternoon and decided that he would visit the races. Being an obliging sort of chap, Linnan agreed to place some bets on behalf of other stewards, one for five shillings and the other for two shillings and six pence. At about 1 p.m., or an hour and a half before Linnan was due to go off duty, he was telephoned at the Club by a man claiming to be a member and using the name of McPherson. This gentleman asked Linnan to place a bet for him. The steward, being a law-abiding member of the community, replied that he did not take bets and could not participate in any starting price betting transactions.

Alas for Linnan, two men standing near him at the bar, and who were unknown to him as members of the Club, then identified themselves as detectives attached to the traffic branch. They asked Linnan whether he was carrying on the business of a starting price bookmaker, (or perhaps more precisely, as a bookmaker's agent,) in the Club. Although Linnan denied that he was either a bookmaker or a bookmaker's agent, the two detectives confiscated the pieces of cardboard upon which he had written the details of the bets for his fellow stewards.

The secretary, in his report to the committee, accepted Linnan's denial that he was neither a bookmaker nor a bookmaker's agent. 'Unless I have been purposely deceived,' reported the secretary, 'there has been no betting agent amongst members of the Club's staff for some considerable time.' Clearly the qualification of the final phrase suggests that illegal betting might have been going on at some time in the past. The secretary was perturbed enough to ask that, in the event of a conviction, whether the committee would want to retain Linnan's services? 'Is it wise,' he cautioned, 'to keep a man who must be an SP suspect to the Vice Squad and so encourage further visits to the club? Would the fact of our retaining his services be misinterpreted by the Vice Squad, and so lead them to believe that the club is prepared to condone SP activities amongst members of the staff?'

The Club's solicitor, Captain J Paterson, had already undertaken to be in court on

21 October, 1949, as the minutes record, 'to see that the Club's name is not brought into the hearing', an optimistic hope, considering the circumstances. Linnan retained a firm of solicitors to represent him at the hearing; a well-known barrister and Club member, Major R R M King, agreed to appear for the steward and very generously waived payment of his fees. Thus represented did our steward Linnan face the court.

The following month's committee meeting, three days after Linnan's court appearance, received a written report which does not seem to have survived. At the committee meeting the next month, the minutes record that the case against Linnan was dismissed for lack of evidence. At this distance, and with the popularity of legalised off-course betting through the Totalisator Administration Board, the efforts of the Vice Squad in those days seem curiously out of proportion. But the combined forces of the race clubs and the government, acting in both self and common interest, ensured that starting price bookmakers and their 'agents' - a rather grand term for some menial worker who undertook the leg work of the operation - were harassed by the police. It would be surprising if, given the secretary's careful report to the committee, the Club had been entirely free of SP bookmaking or agents among the staff. It is also quite possible that some of the members might have taken advantage of any such SP services that might have been on offer.

No doubt too, a competent barrister would have been able to make much of the fact that the two members of the traffic branch who were drinking at the bar when the hapless Linnan received his telephone call might themselves have been technically in breach of the licensing laws. Still, the matter ended well, and the committee was now aware of yet another pitfall in running a Club in the austere atmosphere of post-war Brisbane.

The case of steward Linnan provided the committee with an interesting, if perhaps unwelcome, diversion. The minutes during this period of consolidation of the Club's records show few momentous decisions; the meetings were spent with the day-to-day detail that, later, was to be left to the secretary. Indeed, many of the agenda items in the minutes for this time and which required the committee's decision, covered housekeeping matters. Only slowly did the Club and the committee grapple with the problems brought about by size and the need to consolidate. At the same time, however, the committee was called upon to make some tough decisions.

For example, members whose cheques had been dishonoured by the bank were expected to resign; the rules were specific. In these early post-war days, many former officers found difficulties in making the adjustments to civilian life; their financial affairs were not always conducted with prudence and forethought. The committee was called on to make some odd decisions. For example, as late as November 1949, the Club was still sending food parcels to at least one reciprocal club, the Army and Navy Club - colloquially known as the 'Rag'* in London. Britain was still in the midst of food rationing; no doubt the parcels from a distant part of Empire were

*From an early claim that its food was a 'rag-and-famish' affair.

considered most welcome. The committee thought that members should know about their own generosity, and so the bulletin sent monthly to members included this useful information. In May, 1950, with the lifting of rationing in the UK, the food parcels ceased. Letters of thanks or other marks of gratitude from the 'Rag' do not survive.

Occasionally, too, the committee needed to remind some of the more unruly members that their 'Club, we would point out most definitely, is an Officers' Club and not a pub'. In a special circular sent to all members in April 1950, just in time for Anzac Day, the committee issued reminders about dress, guests, language and damage to property. 'The order of dress is posted on the notice boards,' the committee said sternly, 'and it is not put there for decoration. It is the member's duty to see his guests are dressed in accordance.' Indeed, guests posed a problem, for the requirements that guests should be accompanied by members on all occasions existed not only in the rules, but also in the licensing laws. 'The complaints by many members regarding bad language are so numerous, members attention is drawn to the fact that apart from other members of the club objecting, it is not a very nice advertisement for visitors,' the committee added.

We have already noted the committee's concern about damage to the Club's property. Now, it reported to the members the collective concern; 'members will be astounded to learn that in the past, towel racks have been torn from the walls, billiard balls and cues have been thrown out of the window and deliberately broken. If any cases of this sort occur again, it is the duty of every member to report the name of the offender to the secretary'. And, added the committee, with more than a hint of sorrow, 'we would appreciate a few members using the suggestion book prior to going to the bar, or at least the following morning.' Quite clearly some of the younger members were providing their elder committee members with a few headaches.

There were, however, compensations and benefits from having such a youthful membership. The United Service Club was very sports-minded at this time with much attention being paid to such games as tennis, golf, lawn bowls, cricket, billiards and snooker. Some members had approached the committee to build a squash court on the premises, but ran into the difficulties of post-war restrictions on building. Expenditure was limited to £100 in any one calendar year; 'As the cost of a court even without spectators' gallery or dressing rooms, would hardly be less than £700 - £800, this would not be practicable', noted the building and maintenance sub-committee on 23 August, 1950. .

The 1950 Ball sub-committee had to contend with a less popular occasion. After the splendid success of the first post-war ball in 1947, its continued support by members might have been taken for granted. Initially, this was the case; the 1948 ball was even larger. But then in subsequent years, attendance began to drop away, perhaps because with returning national prosperity, more alternative outings and

social occasions began to appear. In August 1950, the ball sub-committee met to consider a report that the ball had actually lost £35/6/6, while the cocktail party had made a profit of £41/10/10, leaving a net profit on the combined functions of £6/4/4. Only 287 members nominated to attend the ball. Even with their partners, this was only half the number of people who attended the previous year. The sub-committee decided that Cloudland was becoming too expensive for the smaller numbers and decided that the following year's function would be held at the City Hall.

The minutes for the period record the distinguished visitors entertained by the Club. In December, 1950, the Archbishop of Canterbury was entertained at a reception at which was spent more than £14. Brigadier Jack Amies, who was president at the time, recalls that the Archbishop, who was Chaplain-General of His Majesty's Forces, arrived on a hot and humid day, hatless and wearing a long black cassock. His opening remarks to the members assembled at the top bar were: 'Gentlemen, relax, there will be no sermon. You may wonder why I am wearing this long black robe. It is because, like the Arabs, I believe it is the coolest garb and I don't have to wear anything underneath.' Another visitor during Amies' presidency was Air Marshal Sir Keith Park, who commanded the famous 11 Group, Royal Air Force, during the Battle of Britain. Sir Edmund Herring, commanded the 6th Division Artillery at the 1941 battles of Bardia and Tobruk, and then later commanded a division in Darwin and a force in New Guinea, was also entertained that month. 'Ned' Herring, as he was popularly known, served with distinction in both wars and left the army in 1944 to become Chief Justice of Victoria, a post he held until his retirement in 1964. Sir Edmund Herring was a very staunch supporter of the Naval and Military Club in Melbourne, and an honoured guest in the United Service Club.

The use and, as the minutes record, 'misuse' of the library concerned the committee. Under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Colonel Little and Major Reid, a library subcommittee was established in November, 1950. It met, discussed library policy at length, and adjourned, to meet again in another week. This time, the chairman, Little, noted that 'the question of augmenting the supply of books to the library was discussed in every angle'. Little could state that the committee was not unanimous. However, the decision was reached to buy a number of books, including mostly war-time memoirs. This was the beginning of the boom in publishing war-time memoirs and stories; a reading public anxious for personal accounts was served by the ending of paper rationing which had made wartime and immediate post war publishing so difficult.

Membership of the library sub-committee was no sinecure, for each book, as it arrived, was delivered to a member of the sub-committee for reading. The following week, it was put into circulation. The library sub-committee also thought they were in for some extra work: '...in view of the international situation, which will doubtless bring forth a crop of Colonel Blimps and their kind, and other amateur strategists and tacticians, that considerable attention should be paid to the type of books

purchased dealing with international politics, etc, etc, and etc.’ It seems that, even within a small sub-committee such as this that the potential for divisions was great. Very great difficulty was experienced in reaching any unanimity about what might constitute a suitable lending library.

* * *

By early 1951, the great immediate post-war expansion was over. The 1951 committee, under the presidency of Lieutenant Colonel Amies, was occupied with the great detail of running a now well-established Club and with providing for the members the kinds of services they required. The minutes from the time suggest that committee meetings did not last very long, unlike the immediate post-war years. For example, the first committee meeting held in 1951, on January 30, lists only ten items before general business and most of these were of a fairly pedestrian nature. With an influx of relatively young members, games continued to be important, particularly billiards, snooker, golf and tennis, while the cricket club was popularly supported and attracted some high standard players.

The 1951 committee was still undecided about future expansion of the Club, and particularly the use for the premises next door. Would it be possible that, at some time in the future, the Club might require those premises for its own use? Should they continue to be leased and thus provide a useful source of income? Should they be used for an Associates Club? The January meeting decided not to sell the premises occupied by the Moreton Club, but to extend the lease until 1955, at a rent adjusted to cover the increase in rates. Under the circumstances, this was a remarkably generous arrangement for the ladies club, for the early 1950s saw some inflation arising from the Korean War wool boom. Another committee, with perhaps more commercial instincts, might have opted to increase the rent. Later in the year, the September minutes record that the secretary was instructed to write to the Moreton Club’s president, instructing her that a further year’s tenancy would be granted, as ‘from the 15th April, 1952, but that the Club reserve the right at any time to give less than a year’s notice’. Quite clearly, the committee at the time had its own ideas, about the time-frame for development of possible other uses of these premises and it was not necessary to convey these ideas to the Moreton Club.

At this January committee meeting, members also considered the possibility of forming an ‘Associate Club’ for ladies. Little, as ever a force, chaired this subcommittee, of which more later. By 1951 too, the motor car was beginning to appear as the dominant form of transport. The two tennis courts were being considered for possible parking areas; the January meeting referred this issue to the grounds subcommittee for its opinion. Here, then, was the beginning of the Club’s long and profitable use of the flat area to the rear of its building.

The following meeting, in February, had similarly pedestrian matters to consider. The emerging cricket club occupied the committee's time briefly; its members were instructed to 'co-ordinate their business with that of the sports sub-committee'; perhaps the cricketers, a young and active group, were taking matters rather too much into their own hands, with confusion all around. The perennial problem of members' conduct emerged briefly too; the sports sub-committee apparently reported that some members had neglected to remove their cigarettes from their mouths while playing billiards and snooker. A notice was placed in all billiard rooms: 'Members must not smoke over the billiard tables'. The message was unambiguous; its language clear and forthright.

Service dinners, such as the annual el Alamein dinner, an important occasion for the many members who were veterans of the Australian 9th Division, and the Gunners' annual celebration on St Barbara's Day, began to be held at the Club.* The February 1951 committee meeting resolved that, not only should the Club hold the dinners, but that it should also run them. Any loss on the evening should be borne by the Club.

For the most part, the committee meetings of the 1950s were occupied with important detail, rather than with splendid visions of policy or weighty questions of future directions. Still, much house-keeping had to be done, often requiring deliberations on weighty matters. There were still adjustments to be made in the Club's formal structure to take account of the larger number of members and changing circumstances. Amendments to rules covering absentee members were considered during this time. As well, the committee accepted what were growing lists of resignations; members were finding that the demands of their civilian lives did not leave as much time for club life as perhaps they had hoped.

We get an interesting insight into this important day-to-day aspect of club life from the house sub-committee minutes, dated 27 August, 1951. During the previous month, the Club entertained the distinguished Royal Air Force officer, Sir Keith Park, at the cost of £2/7/-. It paid the secretary his travelling expenses for the month of July: 44 miles at sixpence a mile.** The house sub-committee also considered the installation of new carpets in the lounge and dining room; this task to be carried out by the old Brisbane firm of McWhirters Limited, whose name survives now only on the facade of the Fortitude Valley markets. Clearly the difficulties of 1934 over catering had long receded. The sub-committee also deliberated over the construction of a 'ring-stand' for napkins and, perhaps most importantly, considered the growing losses in the dining room as the result of increased prices. The sub-

*The el Alamein dinner is still held on 23 October each year for members of the three services who fought in that battle, and now for their sons and grandsons. St Barbara's Day dinners, on 4 December, depend very much on the strength of the 'gunner mafia' within the Club.

**By way of comparison, the club secretary now has the use of a motor vehicle and has had since 1985.

committee felt, according to the minutes, 'that the loss in the dining-room for the month of July is an indication of what may be expected from the constant rising costs, which, unfortunately, cannot be offset by an increase in charges without jeopardising the dining-room attendance'. Every little avenue was explored, including charging for coffee. The secretary reported that both the Sydney and Melbourne clubs (Imperial Service and the Naval and Military) charged members for coffee, and suggested that a similar charge of three pence a cup be made. This was rejected by the house sub-committee, which were undoubtedly aware of the reactions this would provoke from members.

Lest this be thought an isolated example, the house sub-committee meeting on October 2, 1951, is equally typical of the period. That sub-committee meeting decided to buy white jackets for the stewards from Rothwells Ltd, then the major mens wear retailer and tailor in Edward Street.* Each steward was to receive four coats. Apparently, too, the sub-committee had received a request that part of the dining room be set aside for non-smokers. However, the minutes record, somewhat sternly: 'This sub-committee is not prepared to consider non-smoking in the dining room', and indeed, the non-smoking area which now applies is relatively recent.

The rising costs continued to impose difficulties at this time. At the following meeting, in October, the secretary again spoke about the problems these costs were causing in various sections of operations. The costs were also having another impact; because of the high wages being paid in southern states, the Club was finding it difficult to hold good catering staff. Coincidentally, the committee resolved at that time to increase the secretary's remuneration to £1050 plus £150 a year entertainment allowance.

In September 1951, the Club lost one of its distinguished members and trustees, Colonel F A Hughes who died. Lieutenant Colonel Byrne Hart was appointed as a trustee. Sir Byrne, as he later became, had served with the 49th Battalion in France during World War I where he was awarded the Military Cross. After the war, he returned to Brisbane and established an accountancy practice.

At the 1951 annual general meeting, held on 22 November, tributes were paid to Colonel Hughes and to another distinguished member who had also recently died, Lieutenant Colonel S L McIntyre, the immediate past president. After the traditional minute's silence, the meeting moved on to the business of the evening, including consideration of the profit and loss accounts and the balance sheet.

The auditor's report that year said that the bar was the only trading department to improve its net earning capacity. The report added:

*For many years, Rothwell's were suppliers to military officers, with a service for ribbons and medals, uniform caps and the like. The company ceased operations as a mens wear retailer in the late 1970s and later, in its guise as a merchant bank, achieved notoriety as one of the more conspicuous collapses in the late 1980s corporate crash.

The following are the percentages of gross profit earned on each trading department of the club after charging against revenue, wages and costs of staff meals, together with the comparative percentage of the previous year.

| | 1951 | 1950 |
|--------------------|------|----------|
| Bar | 17.6 | 14.8 |
| Accommodation | 49.3 | 52.4 |
| Dining Room - Loss | 5.8 | Loss 5.6 |

...Gross revenue in every section showed an increase, but in the case of both the dining room and accommodation departments, the increased costs of services rendered to members exceeded the increase in revenue received. The increase in turnover at £6890 resulting in a decrease in net profit of £109 indicates the extent of the increased costs incurred by the Club during the year. As the coming year will also bring heavy increases by virtue of the approved basic wage increase, careful supervision of the Club's finances in 1952 will be necessary.

Financially, the Club was in reasonably good shape, although it had an overdraft and was losing money on the dining room. Lieutenant Colonel Amies assured members that the commitments were being met, that expenditure was closely controlled and that members had really no cause for concern. Thus assured, the accounts were passed without further discussion and indeed, the item attracted only two speakers, an excellent indication of how well the Club was being run - or at least, the members' belief that it was being well run.

The election of officers proceeded equally smoothly and the items of general business were few. Perhaps concerned at the need to obtain booth licences (a way of selling liquor without a full hotel or club licence) and the like or otherwise avoid the provisions of the Queensland Liquor Act, one member suggested that the annual ball be held on Commonwealth property. Should this be possible, with perhaps fewer members attending, the member suggested that the committee look at restricting the attendance to a member, his wife or partner and members of his immediate family, subject to the approval of the committee. Here, perhaps, we get an early indication of members looking inwards. Earlier balls had been grand social events, attended by many prominent people who were not members. Indeed, the United Service Club balls in the immediate post-war years were considered to be a highlight of a busy social calendar. Now, it seems, that some members were happier to restrict attendance at their ball and keep it 'in-house', as it were.

Few other items were transacted that night. The meeting voted for an 'expression of goodwill', of manner unspecified, for the members then serving in Korea and Malaya, and the meeting was formally declared closed at 9 p.m., one hour after it had opened. Other annual general meetings had taken much longer.

For the new committee, there were relatively few major issues to consider. The next meeting heard some discussion of possible use of the premises occupied by the Moreton Club as an 'Associates Club'. It was not an idea that received great support; at the time few members would have willingly accepted the idea of wives and other associates having the club next door.*

The new committee, at its first meeting, accepted 'with regret' the resignations of some 32 members. For the first time, the reasons were listed in the minutes: they include a significant number of men who had moved inter-state and others who, for financial or similar reasons, found that they were unable to use the Club. Against this loss, 17 new members were elected that night; clearly it was a constant task to maintain membership interest.

The suggestion about holding the ball on Commonwealth property was quickly investigated. The barracks at Kelvin Grove, a major Citizens Military Forces (as the Army Reserve was then known) depot was investigated, but was found to be impractical. Few buildings were large enough to hold the ball and the few that were large were, in those days of serious ball-room dancing, quite impractical. Besides, the onerous provisions of the Liquor Act could not be avoided, simply by holding the function on Commonwealth property. However, despite the apparent shortage of buildings offering facilities similar to those at Cloudland or the City Hall, the committee decided to press on with investigating the Kelvin Grove option.

In March, the committee approached the general officer commanding Northern Command with a view to holding the ball at the Kelvin Grove Barracks; the Club's solicitor was also asked to seek counsel's opinion on the legality of consuming alcohol on Commonwealth property. In the end, the Kelvin Grove option was not pursued; the ball went ahead at Cloudland and was probably less successful than in previous years. Perhaps, by now, the initial post-war novelty had worn off; now the ball was beginning to lose money. The predicted losses for 1952 were £130 pounds due, thought the sub-committee, to the 'non-interest of members'.

At that time, Brisbane's afternoon newspaper, the *Telegraph*, often used to publish caricatures of prominent sporting identities. The committee thought that a series of such drawings of prominent members with sporting affiliations might be suitable for publication and asked the secretary to write to the newspaper with that suggestion. Sadly the newspaper's editor does not appear to have shared the committee's enthusiasm; no such drawings appeared.**

*Little, typical of many members of the time, always maintained that a gentlemen's club was a place where a member could get away from his family for a time and relax in the company of men of compatible interests and standards. He was, however, an attentive husband and father and enjoyed female company. At the annual general meeting in November 1966, where it was decided unanimously to create a category of associate members, Little reminded members he had first proposed the idea nearly 20 years ago. At the time it had not received sufficient support.

**Two *Telegraph* editors have been members of the Club. Lieutenant John Wakefield and Flying Officer Lionel Hogg.

Throughout 1951, the minutes of committee meetings contain many references to the proposed tour by King George VI, a much-loved and respected monarch. Optimistically, members expected the King to visit their Club during the time in Brisbane; it would have been a splendid occasion for the members who were then, perhaps rather more than now, fierce in their support and admiration for the Monarchy and especially for King George VI, whose personal courage and leadership during the war years was marked. Thus, it was with great sadness that members learned of the King's death in February, 1952. His passing was marked with a minute's silence at the February committee meeting.

More than six years since the end of World War II had now elapsed and the committee was anxious to mark, in a permanent fashion, the members who had lost their lives in that conflict. A suitable war memorial was thought necessary but its design and acquisition were matters to be taken seriously and not rushed with any precipitate action. On 8 February, 1952, the executive sub-committee (as the name implies, a smaller version of the full committee but empowered to make executive decisions) met to consider a proposal prepared by Major T G MacMinn, the Club architect, who had been instructed to come up with a suitable memorial. One of the first problems to be addressed was the relation of the World War II memorial to the existing memorial for members who had died during the 1914-18 war.

Major MacMinn told the sub-committee that his proposal was to create a composite memorial that would embrace the two wars. The proposal, very much a compromise between members with World War I service and those younger members who had served between 1939 and 1945, was accepted. The memorial was to include the words: 'and to Members who gave their lives in World War II -1939-1945'. The subcommittee also decided, with aesthetic prudence, to have the old memorial re-gilded 'to bring it into line with the new'. At this distance, such a decision might seem the obvious thing to do but this was a matter of great sensitivity. Many members who had endured the horrors of 1915-1918, particularly those who had served in France and Flanders and who had seen their units suffer grievously with casualties, felt that the 1939-45 conflict was somehow less of a war. Certainly the casualty figures for the two conflicts show that Australia lost more men in World War I than in World War II, despite a much larger numerical contribution to the later war.

Perhaps MacMinn and the committee also took an easy way out. As we have already noted, no accurate list of members who had lost their lives during the war had been kept; much work would have been involved in compiling such a list. It is not to the credit of the committee then that an Honour Roll, equivalent to that of 1914-18, was not produced. In their entertaining history of the RSL, Peter Sekules and Jacqueline Rees relate how returning 1939-45 diggers were actively discouraged from joining particular RSL branches. 'The story is told in different parts of Australia how persistent inquiries about membership were met with suggestions that the "new boys" establish

their own sub-branch. The new members did form their own sub-branches and in some cases revitalised old ones.’* The animosity shown by some World War I veterans to their 1939-45 counterparts was exacerbated by the AIF-militia differences in the latter war and by the Federal Government’s inept handling of the situation by creating, in effect, two different armies. The differences in the Club at the time were nowhere near as marked, but some differences existed and the committee had to show a deal of sensitivity on such issues as memorials; perhaps this attitude helps to explain their decision to prepare such a less than satisfactory memorial.

The question of the dining room losses continued to vex the committee. In February, 1952, it was felt the losses had gone far enough; tough action had to be taken. The house sub-committee suggested that lunch charge be increased from three shillings and sixpence to four shillings and sixpence. But that was just a suggestion; it was up to the full committee to ratify it, which was subsequently done, but only after a deal of discussion.

The day-to-day management was posing problems. Some ambiguities seem to exist about the roles and responsibilities of the secretary - this was, of course, long before the days of duty statements and management objectives. Many of the decisions made by the committee should properly have been made by a manager, or at least by a paid official with wider powers and responsibilities than the secretary appeared to have. The position was complicated further by an employee, a Miss Maslen, who appeared to be efficient, if perhaps officious, and who was assuming for herself responsibilities which might properly have belonged to others, including even committee members. In April, the committee held a special meeting in an attempt to resolve the issue; Should the Club change its organisation to have a manager, not a secretary, or should it have a secretary and assistant secretary? Again, this was a problem created by the rapid growth. Major MacMinn expressed the questions to be considered with admirable succinctness: ‘Is one man capable of carrying out the full duties, of a secretary of a club of this size? What position does Miss Maslen occupy in relation to the secretary?’ Major MacMinn also, very sensibly, sought the views of the retiring secretary on whether a second-in-command or assistant was required. Finally, the committee agreed with MacMinn’s suggestion that the secretary be asked to explain how often he was ‘required to entertain new members, country members and sundry visitors of importance’. There appears to be the suggestion that some committee members might have thought the secretary was rather too interested in this aspect of his work, although he also had other shortcomings.**

*Sekules, Peter and Rees, Jacqueline, *Lest We Forget- The History of the Returned Services League, 1916-1986*, (Rigby 1986)

**Major-General Sir Louis C. Jackson, in his *History of the United Service Club*, observed: ‘No members’ club can be run entirely by the committee. The secretary must be a man of capacity and an administrator, while the committee are there to decide on policy and carry out the wishes of the members. Poor Smart was not and could never be more than a clerk ...’ The majority of the Club’s secretaries were in the same category as Smart.

Once these questions had been formulated by the committee, the secretary then attended the meeting. His answers are recorded. Yes, he thought that one man was capable of carrying out the full duties of secretary. Miss Maslen occupied the position of second in command to the secretary. Of the other questions, the minutes simply record 'the secretary spoke generallyadvised the amount of time put in on the job'.

In April, the committee was told that a member, Flight Lieutenant I G S Purssey had been reported missing in action in Korea. Ian Goodwin Swan Purssey was a pilot with 77 Squadron and a casualty during the heavy air fighting in the early months of 1952. A former bank officer, he had enlisted in the RAAF in 1942 and had served with 450 Fighter Squadron (The Desert Harassers) and 3 Squadron before the end of the war. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in 1952, before he was shot down on 22 April. Purssey was the Club's first casualty during the Korean War. His mother was presented with his DFC by the Queen in March 1954. *

Four members of the Purssey family have been service members of the United Service Club. The original member was Captain Roy Swan Purssey who was repatriated as a sapper from France in 1918. In World War II, he served as an infantry officer in the Middle East and in a training battalion. He played an active role in Club affairs in the early post-war years and his death in 1950 was confirmed to be as a result of extended war service.

Ian Goodwin Swan Purssey was Roy's eldest son. The second son, Major Brian Swan Purssey was commissioned in the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps in 1951. Dr Purssey served 20 years in the CMF, including four years with the British Army's City of London Field Ambulance during studies and work in the UK. In 1967, Brian Purssey served in Vietnam with the Australian Surgical Training Team. A third son, Captain Ronald Swan Purssey, was commissioned into the Royal Australian Air Force in 1953 while serving with 23 City of Brisbane Squadron. After completing four years operational flying training, he spent three years in the UK, serving for a brief period with 410 City of London, Royal Auxiliary Air Force. On returning to Australia, he transferred to the Royal Australian Engineers, CMF, and retired in 1970 after 10 years' service. Ron Purssey served for six years on the Club's committee in the 1970s and, during his time as the Club's honorary architect, was responsible for the major transformation of the top bar, and the downstairs lounge, bar and dining room. Two of Ron Purssey's sons are now members of the Club; indeed, something of a dynasty and one of several families where members of successive generations have been members of the United Service Club.

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The April, 1952 committee meeting was held just three days after Anzac Day. The secretary told the committee that at about 7 a.m. on Anzac Day, he had received a

*See O'Neill, Robert, *Australia in the Korean War, 1950-1953, Volume II Combat Operations*, (The Australian War Memorial and the Government Printing Service, 1985)

telephone call from an inspector in the Licensing Branch, pointing out that Anzac Day was a prohibited day under the Licensing Act. Was this prohibition being observed by members? The minutes note: 'At approximately 12.30 p.m. Sgt Walsh and Constable Harris visited the Club and asked whether any liquor was being sold on the premises. A request was then made by them to visit the bar, which was granted, and after they saw the bar was closed, they left the club premises'. At this distance, it might seem oddly ironic that the Licensing Branch should concern itself with such trivialities but the non-liquor observance of Anzac Day was important to officials, if not all the members, of the RSL. It was a sacred day, not one to be spent in boozing. Liquor was prohibited but later, the laws were relaxed to enable liquor to be sold in the afternoons, after the Dawn Services and marches.

The April meeting also appointed Major A W Booth as secretary, to succeed the retiring Flight Lieutenant J B Riddall. Booth was invited to live in the Club; the accommodation charge was £2/5/- a week. Later, his salary was fixed at £1200 a year. By comparison, a four ounce glass of beer was sixpence and a seven ounce glass eightpence halfpenny.

Then, as now, one of the requirements of a good committee is to be aware of the commercial possibilities, as and when they arise. The tennis courts were proving popular to members but to some members of the committee, the courts represented vacant land capable of being converted to an income-earning asset. In May, 1952, a special meeting was called to consider buying a property at 432 Upper Edward Street. The property, with a frontage of 33 feet and extending 98 feet back to join the vacant land next to the tennis court, would provide much-needed access. 'Without that access,' said Lieutenant Colonel Amies in his special notice to members, 'the tennis courts area has little real monetary value, as it has no outlet except by the narrow lane to Wickham Terrace through the remainder of the Club's land'.

The purchase price, £3500 with improvements, was, thought Amies, 'very reasonable'; sufficient funds were available in the current account to provide the sum. It was, indeed, a very good buy and the 29 members who attended the lunchtime meeting on 30 May thought so too. They approved the motion to buy the land quickly and the meeting was over in 10 minutes.

The Club also found itself with surplus accommodation. Some of the rooms could be occupied by visiting members, and members of other clubs, but much of the accommodation remained vacant. In August 1952, the committee decided that a maximum of six rooms could be made available to non-members, providing that at all times rooms were available for members who required them. The visitors would be eligible for honorary membership, but required to be vouched for by members that they were of the 'necessary high standard'. Clearly this was the first entry into the Club of people with a non-service background; even then, it was a matter of financial prudence and the future viability.

Royal Tours and Life Members

So frequent have royal tours become in recent years, it is difficult today to imagine the excitement that accompanied the preparations for the 1954 Australian Royal Tour. Queen Elizabeth the Second, the recently-crowned Monarch of a British Empire that was then rapidly diminishing and perhaps even already over, was already a popular and loved figure. As one of the 'princesses' of popular imagination, she had shared the trials of wartime Britain, serving as a driver in the Auxiliary Transport Service. The Royal Family was not then subjected to the kind of scrutiny and intense criticism which it endures today; the Monarchy was thought by an overwhelming percentage of the population to be a force for good: brave and resourceful in its leadership during war; objects of affection and respect in peace.

Both here and in the United Kingdom, scarcely a newspaper report referred to the young Queen without describing her as 'radiant' and, although the cliché was overused, it was also apt. There was a kind of glow about the Queen and, indeed, about the entire family. Her husband was a dashing handsome naval officer who had been in Australia briefly during the war and was remembered by many Australians with affection. The death of King George VI in 1952 had meant the end of his planned visit to Australia, a loyal dominion during the war. The King had died while Princess Elizabeth was in Africa, *en route* to Australia. That visit was cancelled. Now a tour by Queen Elizabeth II, and so soon after the Coronation, brought to the surface deep feelings of imperial loyalty and duty to the British Crown. In the early 1950s, Australia was a very different place; the first wave of post-war migration came from the United Kingdom, and these immigrants brought with them an innate respect for the Monarchy. Then, to use the phrase made famous much later by the Prime Minister, Robert Gordon Menzies, Australia was still 'British to the boot-straps'. The members of the United Service Club, Brisbane, were proudly - even fiercely - loyal; they were quick to defend the Monarchy; they looked forward, with eager expectation, to the visit to Brisbane of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh in 1954.

At the 1952 annual general meeting, 57 members rose to their feet and observed what the minutes record as 'the customary silence' to mark the death of their King and 19 of their fellows.* In 1953, the committee decided to hold a formal dinner to

*Including Engineer Commander W K Kirkcaldie, convenor of the house sub-committee and Captain O C C Moffatt, who had been nominated for membership of the committee.

mark the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth. II. It was a suitably formal occasion, with the members in Winter mess kit or tails, which meant white tie, a form of formal dress that has all but disappeared today.*

After some initial consideration by the house sub-committee, the idea was proposed that the Club should fund the dinner, with the members to attend being chosen by ballot. That idea, however, did not gain much approval and the dinner was held, on a payment basis, with 90 members attending, as well as the Minister for the Army, Captain Josiah Francis (who was also a Club member), the Chief Justice of Queensland, Mr Justice Neal Macrossan and the state director of the Royal Tour, F A Manning, then a senior public servant.

Indeed, Coronation Week, 1953, was a splendid week for the Club. Buoyed by the news that Mount Everest had been conquered, and that their Queen was soon to be crowned, the members enthusiastically embraced the social side of the Coronation celebrations, holding a third, and easily the most successful, cocktail party for the year. The 1952/53 annual report includes this description, which also gives a good idea of the prevailing sentiments about the Monarchy.

The Club during Coronation Week was flood-lit, thanks to the good offices of a resident member, and the central theme of the decoration was a huge Crown standing over the Royal Cypher with a stand of flags surrounding the Crown. The flags consisted of those of Australia and the three services, the Union Jack and the Club Flag. At night, the façade had a most pleasing effect, restrained but colourful. For the Royal Visit, further decorations will be effected without over-shadowing the central theme.

Fortunately, we retain still some idea of the nature of these ‘restrained but colourful’ decorations with their ‘pleasing effect’. In the snack bar of the Club hangs a photograph taken during the Royal Tour, neatly and well illuminated. ‘God Save Our Queen’, proudly proclaims the sign over the Crown. The Coronation Dinner was a hugely successful occasion and augured well in preparations for the visit the following year.

The visit itself took place from 9 March to 12 March, 1954. At the time, the Brisbane *Courier-Mail* devoted pages and pages to the event, quite the biggest news in the city since the end of the Second World War. Its reports, gushing by today’s more restrained standards, indicated a city more than slightly obsessed with the Royal Tour. From the Club’s point of view, it is necessary only to quote the annual report of that year:

* In Queensland, winter mess kit has virtually disappeared from public view; more than a decade ago, the Australian Army decided that winter did not exist in Queensland and opted to wear summer uniforms all year around. The one exception is the Army Officers Ball, a not-always-annual occasion.

The whole of the brickwork in the front of the club has been repointed and glazed during the year. This was work which had to be done and the finish of the work coincided with the Royal Visit, enabling Members to feel proud of the impeccable appearance of the Club, which was passed on two occasions, once by day and once by night, by the Royal Visitors.

In these comments, there is a quaint, almost touching note, as if to suggest that the Royal Couple were on some kind of tour of inspection to determine whether club premises had been restored, refurbished or renovated. But the members, indeed, could be proud of the appearance of their premises; the committee had been working hard and deliberating long to ensure the best possible appearance for the occasion. And in this, the committee members were not alone; Brisbane's residents were urged by the civic leaders, and the newspapers, to make a special effort to spruce up a city that was still, nearly nine years later, showing the effects of the war. Some residents responded in surprising ways, as the journalist Keith Dunstan* reported. One householder in Kingsford Smith Drive took a lawn mower to his sloping lawn which lay on the Royal Route. With careful strokes, the proud householder cut the legend 'E II R' in the long March grass.

One of the consequences of the Royal Tour was the decision to make Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, a life member. That decision was passed by a special meeting held on Monday, 8 March, 1954. Another indication of the prevailing imperial sentiment can be gained from the attendance figures; 51 members were present and another six sent apologies for a meeting that must have been, surely, a mere formality. At the meeting, the president, Wing Commander A F McSweyn, told members that the Club had written to Prince Philip's private secretary asking whether 'His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh, [would] honour the Club by accepting life membership'. Needless to say, the members hoped that, during the Royal Tour, the Duke of Edinburgh might be able to visit the Club, the chairman told members that no notice could be given to them of such a visit because the Club itself would receive only a short notice. On 11 March, 1954, from the Government House, Brisbane, Commander Michael Parker, the Duke's private secretary, wrote to the secretary, Major Booth: 'His Royal Highness has asked me to say that he would be delighted to accept life membership of The United Service Club of Brisbane and would be grateful if you would convey his appreciation to the President and Committee'. Then, five days later, Commander Parker wrote again: The Duke of Edinburgh was hoping very much that he would be able to visit the United Servtce Club, Brisbane, in the few days we are here, but unfortunately It now seems clear that it will be impossible to fit in. I know His Royal Highness is extremely sorry about this,

*Himself a member of the Club, as Flying Officer J K Dunstan. His autobiography, *No Brains at All* (Viking, 1991) is hugely entertaining and full of Dunstan's quirky, self-deprecating humour.

but I feel sure you will be very understanding, although somewhat disappointed.’* The life membership was a way of formally recognising Prince Philip's visit to Brisbane, if not to the Club. The committee meeting following the Royal Visit read letters of thanks from members of the Royal Tour party who had been given honorary membership while in Brisbane. Among that party was a former Royal Australian Air Force navigator and Commonwealth detective, R W Whitrod, who was later to have honorary membership again while serving as Queensland's police commissioner.**

Important as the Royal visit was in the life of the Club, other weighty matter that year had to be considered. The 1954 annual reported devoted almost as much space to a report of the installation of a new instantaneous beer cooling system in the main bar. As the president reported, the cold cabinets previously in use could not keep beer at the temperature required. Indeed, in March that year, the convenor of the house sub-committee told a full committee meeting that he had received a complaint about warm beer and lack of ice on an important day, the day of the RSL rally. Why should this be so? The secretary's reply was illuminating; it reveals the consumption of beer by thirsty members of the time.

...the average consumption of beer for Tuesday and Wednesday over the past six months was 13 kegs, six on one day and seven on the other. On the 16th and 17th [the days complained about by the irate member] 37 kegs were used and beer had to be obtained from forward quotas. No extra beer was made available and the only way to stock up was to ask the breweries to deliver ahead of time. This was done by Queensland Brewery only. On the day in question one hundred and ten visitors were signed into the visitor's book.

And, added the secretary, although one hundred and ten visitors were signed in, undoubtedly a number of other visitors did not go through the required formalities. The same problem applied with ice; the demand simply outstripped the supply for what was considered 'normal needs'. However, it was with this kind of demand in mind that the committee decided to invest in improved beer cooling equipment. Now, as the president, Wing Commander McSweyn, said, 'with the new equipment all beer is served at a constant 42 degrees' (Fahrenheit). It was an important decision and took several committee meetings to reach after quotes were received from several leading refrigeration engineering suppliers.

*Happily, these letters survive, some of the very few from the Club's one hundred years. **Ray Whitrod later joined the Club as a service member and, although resident in South Australia, retained his membership until September 1990. In controversial circumstances, detailed in G E Fitzgerald's report into corruption in Queensland, Whitrod was succeeded as Police Commissioner by Terence Murray Lewis. Later knighted, in 1991 Lewis was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment on corruption charges. He was an honorary member while he was Police Commissioner, an honour withdrawn smartly on his conviction.

In the early 1950s, sport played an important part in Club life, particularly for the many members who joined after 1946 and who were still young men. Billiards and snooker had been played since the very beginning of the Club, but at this time, cricket and golf were the main outdoor games, but tennis and bowls also had their supporters and later a fishing club enjoyed brief support. Occasionally, too, more energetic sports such as squash had their adherents among members but most attention was paid to cricket and golf with cricket seeming to capture public attention outside the Club, and to a degree quite remarkable today.

Members played in cricket matches of a remarkably high standard. Take, for example, a game played on 24 November 1954, between the United Service Club and a team comprising members of the Press covering the 1954-55 Marylebone Cricket Club tour of Australia. The Press team included the former Australian opening batsman Lindsay Hassett, the graceful and elegant Jack Fingleton and the great spin bowler of the Bradman era, Bill O'Reilly. One newspaper report suggested that Hassett was still good enough to open the batting for Australia, and added that Fingleton, too, was confident of his ability to make runs - so long as he could be given a 'spare knee, a deputy runner and a fielding substitute'.

As well, the Englishmen Bill Bowes who played in the notorious Bodyline series, Fred Brown, a former MCC captain, former England players Eric Bedser and George Duckworth turned out for the press team. Proceeds from the guinea entrance fee to Perry Park went to Legacy; even the president of Legacy chose to contribute a cheque for the privilege of watching this game. Hits over the fence were encouraged, even in these days well before the advent of Kerry Packer and World Series Cricket; a six was worth a pound in donations. The donations were made by Brisbane business firms to ensure some bright cricket in what was essentially a light-hearted match between two teams of skilled players with the aim of raising funds for a very worthy charity.

The United Service Club team was captained by Flight Lieutenant Jock Tuckfield, described in one newspaper report as a former Victorian grade cricketer. Tuckfield had certainly played cricket at his school, Scotch College in Melbourne. He was a most enthusiastic cricketer for the Club and assumed both the duties and the privileges of captaincy with alacrity. Most importantly, the Club team included the former test player, Flight Lieutenant Bill Brown, who owned and operated a sports store in George Street. Other players included Major Murphy, a fine cricketer who was later a long-time president of the Queensland Cricket Association, as well as a Club president of distinction. At the time of writing, Douglas Murphy is still turning out for the occasional game of cricket as a Lord's Taverner and turning in very creditable performances as both a wicket-keeper and late order batsman. In 1991, he was 78. *

*Douglas Murphy was also the first graduate of the Royal Military College, Duntroon, to become president of the United Service Club. He was immediate past president for nearly five years. He fulfilled these roles with grace and wisdom.

The other team members were: Major Heaton Blackman,* Flight Lieutenant A Aydon, Captain J Chisnall, Captain J Girdham, Major J Mahoney, Captain R Richards, Flight Lieutenant Len Summers and Wing Commander J Wright. It was a splendid team, comprising high-spirited and still young men, who had survived a war, the challenges of peace and were enjoying the pleasures of the game by playing with friends, occasionally against high-class competitors and always in a spirit of good fun and grand sportsmanship.

The umpires for this match - three sharing the duties - were the English broadcasters Arthur Gilligan and John Arlott, along with the former Queensland international Dr Otto Nothling. The commentator - the match was broadcast over a loud-speaker system - was Clive Harburg of the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Hours of play were 1 p.m. to 5.45 p.m., with tea at 3.15 p.m. Batting time was halved.

The surviving newspaper clippings in the Club's records suggest there was great public interest in this game, played in the presence of the Governor, His Excellency Sir John Lavarack. Leading up to the game, Brisbane's newspapers devoted much space to the fixture and, as play proceeded, the various editions of the then Brisbane *Telegraph* produced running reports. We don't know which captain won the toss but the Club batted first, with Bill Brown, then captaining Queensland, scoring 30 without offering a chance before being stumped by Woodcock off the spin bowling of the wily 'Tiger' O'Reilly. Douglas Murphy topped the scoring with 59 before being given out in front of the wicket to Eric Bedser, who would have been making that ball swing on a hot and humid November afternoon.

With the addition of 57 by Richards, Brown declared the Club's innings closed at seven for 187. Despite some spirited batting by Fingleton, Hassett and Percy Beames, the Press team could manage only 160 runs. Fingleton's fears about knees, runners and substitute fieldsmen proved to be well-grounded; he retired hurt after scoring 35 runs which had all the old elegance of this most attractive batsman. Lindsay Hassett scored 22, Percy Beames managed 41 and E W 'Jim' Swanton, long-time cricket correspondent for the London *Daily Telegraph*, added 24. Swanton had made a full recovery to health after being a prisoner of the Japanese during the war. It was a fine victory for the Club over a team of excellent players, admittedly some of whom had passed their prime. That evening, both sides joined Sir John and Lady Lavarack for a reception at Government House.

Two years before, also during Legacy week, the Club's team had taken part in what was the first night cricket game to be played in Queensland, and probably one of the first to be played in Australia.** A Composite side, which included players such as

*The following year, Blackman won the Major Reid Trophy for outstanding performance, by taking a hat trick in his first match of the season.

**The claim is made in one of the press reports that this was the first night cricket game to be played in Australia. If this is so, and it seems likely, then it is ironic that nearly 40 years later, Queensland is one of the few states without the facilities to stage night cricket.

Wally Grout, Jack Fingleton, Peter Burge, Dick Whittington and Ron Archer was formed. It also contained two visiting South Africans, manager Ken Viljoen and batsman Gerald Innes. For the past 20 years, this country has had no sporting ties with South Africa and indeed, the last cricketers from that country to play here toured in 1965.* But in the immediate post-war years, the bonds of friendship between South Africa and Australia were strong; the South Africans, allies during the war, were welcomed as honoured visitors. The presence of a touring South African cricket team was an excellent opportunity for a demonstration match to be played under lights. Reported Harry Jeffries of the Brisbane *Telegraph*:

Queensland's first night cricket match and the first of its kind in Australia is being organised for the Exhibition ground on December 3, before the first South African Test. It will be in aid of Legacy. All RNA ticket holders will have to pay admission. The United Services (sic) Cricket Club, which is organising the game, will play against former interstate and international players, and pressmen touring with the South African side. Night cricket was only introduced to the world a few months ago in England. In one game Len Hutton's side played the Kangaroos eleven. The Australian footballers later reported the game had been a 'huge success'.

The cricketers used the existing lighting at the Exhibition Ground, which was then focussed on the speedway track. Jeffries reported that the game would be played between 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. 'Legacy secretary, (Mr S B Walker), anticipates a huge crowd for the night. He also has no doubts that the idea will catch the public's fancy.' And, added Jeffries in a wry footnote: 'Perhaps it is night cricket that Queensland cricket needs. Queensland Shield players can't do any good in the day time.'

On the night, more than 2500 people watched the Composite side comprehensively defeat the Club's team. Of a total of 302, made in just 114 minutes, Wally Grout scored 70, Fingleton 69 and Peter Burge 52. Against this total, the Club's cricketers could manage only 179, of which Douglas Murphy scored 54. Ron Archer, playing for the Composite side and later a Test cricket and a well-known Brisbane businessman, took three wickets for nine runs and Bill O'Reilly 3 for 20. In its report the next morning, *The Courier-Mail* said: 'Specially prepared white balls were used, but the other material was standard equipment. When the ball lost its shine a new one was introduced. Bowlers did not bowl beyond medium pace and batsmen said that these deliveries could be watched all the way.'

That morning, too, *The Courier-Mail* carried a photograph of a young woman spectator watching the game in what was described as 'a backless sun suit'. Added the newspaper, 'In October last year a woman who appeared in the members' stand at

*As this book was going to press, a South African cricket team was in Australia to participate in the World Series competition.

the Brisbane Cricket Ground wearing a backless sun suit had her ticket cancelled by the QCA.’ The newspapers took a great deal of interest in the attire of the women spectators. Reported *Truth* on Sunday, 23 November: ‘Twill be interesting to see if our femmes possess sufficient originality to set a fashion precedent for “night cricket wear” for the rest of the States to follow.’ More importantly, the game raised nearly £ 300 for Legacy.

In the early 1950s, New Farm Park was a popular venue for important cricket matches. On 29 November, 1956, the Club's team again met an Interactional Press Team, captained by W A ‘Bill’ Bowes. This team included Jack Fingleton, Dick Whittington and Bill O’Reilly, who had played in earlier matches. Allan McGilvray, the former New South Wales cricketer who was the voice of ABC cricket for so long* was also in the team, as was Victor Richardson, grandfather of the Chappell brothers and a superb cricketer for both South Australia and Australia. ‘Jim’ Swanton was again in the team as was Vivien Jenkins, who had the distinction of being a double blue at Oxford, for cricket and rugby. Jenkins played county cricket for Middlesex and was capped for Wales as a fullback; at the time, he was a BBC broadcaster.

For the Club, Bill Brown and George Gooma opened the batting, with the rest of the team consisting of Gordon Robertson, J C Mahoney, R Quinn, Tuckfield, Richards, Blackman, Dearnley, Girdham and Summers. The Empire Press team, as it was described, scored nine for 186. However McGilvray took four wickets for 17 and the Club’s side could reach only 155.

The cricket club was easily the most active of the sporting groups, fortunate in having such useful cricketers as Bill Brown, Jock Tuckfield and Douglas Murphy among its members; there existed with these men the impetus for organising games against visiting Press teams or against other local clubs, in the best of friendly competitive spirit.** It is ironic that night cricket in Australia, first played in such a pleasant and worthwhile atmosphere in Brisbane, should have degenerated now into a raucous opportunity for excessive drinking and boorish behaviour. It is also ironic that Bill O’Reilly, today still writing for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and one of the fiercest critics of what he dismissively calls ‘pyjama cricket’, should have taken part in the first game to be played under lights in this country.

But if cricket was thriving in the early 1950s, tennis was under threat. Not from any lack of interest among members, for this was still a time when suburban houses boasted lawn and gravel tennis courts, before the seemingly relentless advance of rezonings made such large properties attractive to property developers. But the

**The Games Not the Same without McGilvray* (ABC Books, 1986) was the title of his autobiography. Sadly, it is not. .

**It was very much a ‘club within a Club’. The minutes for this period suggest that the committee was not always pleased with the independent spirits of the United Service Cricket Club, including Jock Tuckfield.

tennis courts at the rear of the Club had fallen into some disuse and the purchase of the Edward Street property made their conversion into car parking a more than merely attractive proposition.

On 28 June, 1954, the committee heard from Major T G MacMinn * that when the cottage was removed from Upper Edward Street, a ramp would be constructed and the tennis courts covered with a load of decomposed granite. Then the area would be graded so that the water would run into existing spoon drains. And, as the minutes record: 'With regard to the roofing of the lower car park, an approach would be made to the responsible official in the Brisbane City Council Department of Planning for the necessary authority for work to commence.'

The question of covered car parks disappears from the minutes for some meetings and emerges in 1955, only to be dismissed. The 1955 annual report summarizes the progress: 'Work will begin immediately on the car park and ramp entrance from Edward Street. Although several propositions have been discussed by the committee, it is felt that we should undertake this work ourselves. Members will thus have the benefit of parking on a bitumen surface as against the mud walk which they have accepted for so long.' Of course, the roofing of a section of the car park has taken rather longer than might be imagined from the 1954 minutes. It was completed in 1991. In fairness, however, the Club only parked on its property by 'let', not law. To seek to cover what was effectively 'illegal' parking places had its dangers. In 1991, the Brisbane City Council approval to erect covered parking places was obtained only after a great deal of care.

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By the mid 1950s, ten years after the war's end and well beyond the boom period for membership, the Club was beginning to experience some quieter times. Although membership was not declining greatly, the level of resignations was worrying some of the more thoughtful committee members who wondered about the future viability of the Club. Certainly the nature of the membership was changing. As Major Murphy wrote in the preface to the April, 1955, Bulletin: 'No longer are we concerned alone in welcoming new and returning members from the commissioned ranks of two World wars. Additionally today applications for admission come from the Permanent and Citizen Forces of the three Services from veterans of the BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Forces] in Japan, from Korea and Malaya- to many of whom conceivably the earlier Wars are of abstract concern only.'

At this time, successive committee meetings record concerns about the level of

*MacMinn was an architect and, at one time, the honorary Club architect. Later president, he died in office after swallowing half a toothpick in the Club dining room, a fact not recorded in the minutes.

trading activities. Costs were rising and, although trading was still strong, gross profits were beginning to fall. It also seems clear that some of the initial rush of enthusiasm for the Club by the new newer, post-World War II members was beginning to wane. Many of these men had now settled into comfortable, if demanding, domesticity; the relative freedom of the war years to spend time with their old comrades was now circumscribed by duties and responsibilities in the home. It was in this general atmosphere of rising costs and perhaps peaking use that the Club looked at disposing of some of its property. The Green House, next door, looked to be a likely candidate.

On 23 February, 1955, the establishment and maintenance sub-committee recommended that the premises and land 'known as the Green House should be disposed of by sale'. Today, nearly four decades later, the reasoning behind this recommendation makes interesting reading.

First, argued the majority of members on the sub-committee, the premises would require painting externally within the next 12 months. Secondly, dry rot was evident in portion of the building. Thirdly, the paintwork was drab and could be brightened; fourthly, the building was estimated to have a life expectancy of approximately 20 years during which heavy maintenance would have to be met. After much detailed financial examination of rentals and comparisons with other buildings, the subcommittee thought it would be better to capitalise on the Green House premises. Driving the arguments, it seems from the minutes, was the feeling that timber buildings had finite lives and that the Green House was reaching the end of its life. This was, of course, before the current enthusiasm for restoring old wooden buildings, both domestic and commercial. Brick was thought to be a more attractive option for building and for renovating; the relative benefits of brick, as opposed to timber, were thought to lie in the costs of maintenance and repair. Little, if any, thought was given to the aesthetics of timber buildings, well restored to near-original conditions and well maintained by comprehensive and regular services.

The sub-committee's report was effectively blocked by the full committee. The minutes note that the chairman, Major Murphy, thought disposal of the Green House was far too important a proposition to be considered in haste. He also knew well that the membership would object to the sale of any of the Club's property. If the valuable asset of this building were to be sold, a strong case - stronger than that prepared by the sub-committee - would have to be prepared for submission to members. And when this case was prepared, members would have to refer to the 1947 policy on property; sale of the Green House would run directly counter to that policy. Of course, it was open to any new gathering of members to change policy at any time; it had been done frequently, if marginally, in the past. But this was different. Here was a proposal effectively to sell a large slice of the Club's property holdings to fund some improvements - improvements which should have been funded either by revenue generated or, if necessary, by limited and prudent borrowings. However, the

committee was aware of the reduction in use by members and of the possibility that one day, the Club might find it prudent to move to smaller, rather than larger, premises.

A special committee meeting to deal with the question was called for 14 March. Unfortunately the minutes of this meeting have not survived but it seems clear from subsequent committee meetings that the proposal to sell the Green House came to nothing. In light of the Club's development since then, it is just as well that more cautious views prevailed.

Riding the Boom Years

Since the end of World War II, certainly, and probably before, committees of the United Service Club have prided themselves on moving with the times. Sometimes, of course, that movement was slow, even delayed. But eventually the movement occurred; the advances of technology such as improved refrigeration systems, air-cooling and later, air-conditioning were installed as soon as funds allowed. Power points were installed for electric shavers, as soon as these gadgets appeared on the markets; members were offered the use of the Club's shaver, held at the front desk, to freshen up before a night in town. As drip-dry shirts appeared, accommodation facilities were changed so that members could rinse their shirts in the hand basins and hang them up to dry. Even takeaway meals were offered by the Club once this form of dining became popular in the town. But some advances in modern technology did not necessarily attract committee members.

In November 1955, the committee had before it a letter from a member. The Club was in the middle of renovating the top bar, a long-overdue and eagerly awaited project. This member, who perhaps should remain nameless, had a bright suggestion: Could a pinball machine be installed? Pinball machines, today another method of young people mispending their youth, were then a relatively new phenomenon, although it takes some creative thought to imagine such a machine in the bar - even the bar - of the United Service Club. Major-General W A B Steele,* then the secretary, supported the request. He thought the Club might earn five hundred pounds a year from it. Major MacMinn, perhaps speaking with an even greater knowledge of the membership, opposed the suggestion, and it was referred to the house facilities subcommittee where, it seems, it died a natural, and given the circumstances, not altogether- unwelcome death.

At the time, the house sub-committee had more pressing matters to consider than the installation of pinball machines, however potentially profitable they might have been. Once again, the difficult question of accommodation charges was under

*Major General W A B Steele CBE was a regular officer who had served with the Light Horse in World War I and who had commanded both a Motor Division and an Armoured Division during World War II. He was born in Gympie in 1894 and is remembered today as a comfortable gentleman who spent much time, away from his not particularly onerous secretarial duties, sitting on the verandah with a gin in his hand.

review. The members of this sub-committee were well aware of the difficulties their colleagues on the finance sub-committee were having in framing the next year's budget. Brigadier Amies, on behalf of that sub-committee, recommended an increase in accommodation charges of 20 percent, as well as increases in dining room prices and in parking fees. As that year's annual report noted:

The dining room and snack bar has always showed a trading loss and the trend in 1955 did not pass unheeded as the year progressed. The committee noted the steady increase in costs, much of which was brought about by improving the quality of meals and services, but bearing in mind the relationship which this department bears to the bars and accommodation, it refrained from passing on all of the increase to members by way of higher prices. The extent to which the loss in this department is to continue in relation to the otherwise favourable trading results in other departments is a matter for further consideration and determination.

Here is a question of central philosophy for all clubs such as the United Service. Should one department or operation, itself intrinsically profitable, be used to subsidise other departments or operations? This question has arisen frequently in the Club's history, particularly since it moved to the existing premises on Wickham Terrace and attempted to offer a wider range of services to members. It might be argued that, as the services are provided for members, the question of one operation subsidising another is not important - so long as the final result is a trading profit across the whole Club operations. However, more prudent financial practice suggests that each operation should aim to cover costs at the very least. At the time, this question was largely unresolved, although Brigadier Amies' timely suggestion - that losses be kept to an absolute minimum - seemed to satisfy the committee for the time being.

The next meeting saw some detailed discussion of the proposed accommodation increases. No doubt the committee was apprehensive about the reaction of members to a 20 percent increase; at that time, double-digit inflation was not known and such an increase would have met stiff resistance from members. Flight Lieutenant Tuckfield offered this suggestion; because the accommodation operation already made a profit, why not keep charges as they were but embark on a drive to increase the number of people staying at the Club. This could be done, he said, by advertising in affiliated clubs and in the Club's bulletin. Brigadier Amies replied to this apparently sensible suggestion: The increased accommodation charges had been put forward to increase revenue in all departments. The next year, with its heavy expenditure, would mean additional revenue simply had to be generated. He doubted that additional numbers could be generated, because only a certain number of people travelled each month and there seemed no way of increasing this. The only solution was an increase in charges. Amies' view prevailed, particularly after



Major Bob Thompson Cowlshaw MC (1888–1974). President 1943.



Commander Eric Augustus Feldt OBE RAN (1899–1968). Secretary 1946.

The Club illuminated for visit of HM The Queen, 1954. (By courtesy of the John Oxley Library)





*Brigadier Jack Lowell Amies CBE
ED. Born 1913. President 1950-51.
Trustee 1988.*

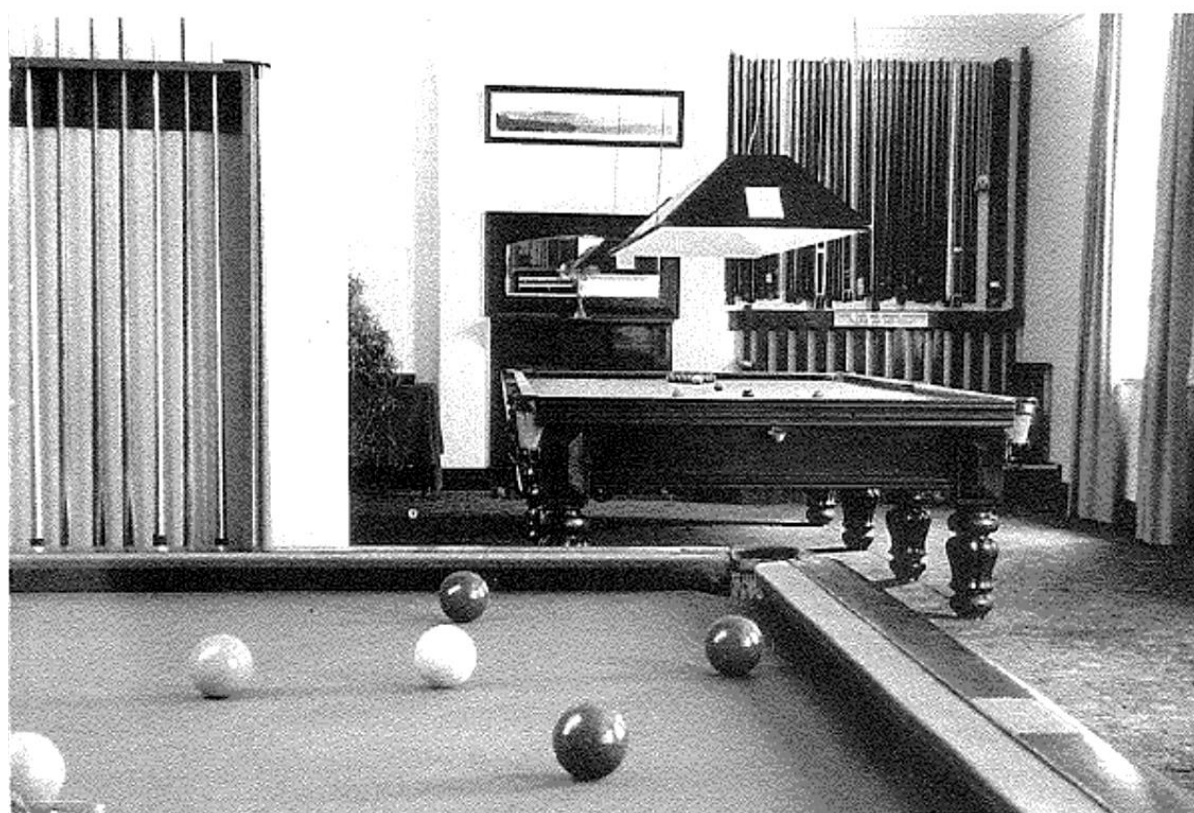


*Wing Commander Allan Francis
McSweyn MC AFC. Born 1918.
President 1952-53.*



*Major Douglas Gordon
Murtagh Murphy AM. Born
1914. President 1954-55.*

The Club billiard room.



he argued that dining room and bar charges were comparable to other establishments and therefore accommodation charges should be similarly set.

Even so, the setting of the accommodation charges involved a long and painful process. Comparative figures were sought and obtained from affiliated clubs, from the Gresham and National* hotels and from the Commercial Travellers Club. The Gresham, National and CTA Club are, alas, no more; victims of changing commercial practices and the extraordinary demand for central business district property. So, finally the committee approved the new accommodation charges: A single room increased from eighteen shillings to £ 1.5.0 a day; a shared suite from a guinea to £ 1.10.0, a single suite from £ 1.15.0 to two guineas and permanent guests had their accommodation charges increased from fifteen shillings a week to a guinea.

The 1950s were prosperous years and the Club entered the second half of the decade in good shape. Some parts of the Club needed renovation and the accommodation rooms might have been a little austere, but fundamentally the Club was financially sound and well used by members. It offered services that were popular; in the days before random breath testing and with more tolerant community attitudes towards drinking, many members were able to have a few drinks after work and still make their way home safely. The refurbished top bar was opened on Friday, 23 March, 1956; the collection of crests and plaques which now adorns it was begun in January 1957; but the annual reports for these years and the minutes give only cursory attention to the planning and preparation for the opening. But they do record that 'two or three members, much taller than the average, had asked whether consideration could be given to the safety rail at the windows of the top verandah so that it was raised as a protection from accidents'. Happily no member has yet fallen out of the top bar.

Proposals to impose a levy to help pay for improvements were put, and quickly rejected. Levies, the committee was told by some members, were only for organisations in imminent danger of financial collapse; that was certainly not the case with the Club. It was well-run and able, on its committee, to draw on an extraordinary array of talent and background. For example, the 1955-56 committee included a manufacturer, a bank officer, an architect, a real estate agent, a solicitor, a medical practitioner, a dental surgeon, an auto sales executive, an insurance representative, a chartered accountant, a textile distributor, a share broker, a lecturer and a planter.

But the second half of the decade was also a period in which membership

*The Gresham, situated on the corner of Creek and Adelaide Street, where the National Bank now has a building, was a splendid old hotel and fine example of architecture. Much loved by country people, the Gresham was a pillar of respectability. It was also where officers met after parades before the formation of the Club in 1892. The National Hotel, where Queen and Adelaide meet at Petrie Bight, was rather more risqué than the Gresham and was the subject of a Royal Commission that traversed much of the same ground as that held by G E Fitzgerald QC.

consolidated. Each committee meeting considered important issues and items on the agenda: a memorial plaque for the late George Sye; a life membership for the Victoria Cross winner E T Towner, the Club's only winner of this honour and so a member whose military career was mentioned briefly in an earlier chapter but is now worth recording in some detail.*

Edgar Thomas Towner was born at Glencoe Station, on a property owned by his father in the Barcoo country. He was educated at Blackall state school and worked with his father until his enlistment in the AIF on 4 January, 1915. He was allotted to the 25th Battalion. By February 1916, Towner had served briefly on Gallipoli and had been promoted to sergeant. By November 1916, he had been commissioned and was then posted to the 2nd Machine Gun Battalion. In September 1918, Towner was serving with this unit when he won the Victoria Cross at Mont St Quentin, near Peronne. Towner was also awarded the Military Cross. After the war, Towner owned a property, 'Kaloola', near Longreach and served briefly with the 26th Battalion, an Australian Military Forces unit, during World War II. He was also extremely interested in Australian history and geography, was a fellow of both the Royal Geographical Society of Australia and the Royal Historical Society of New South Wales and in 1956, received the Dr Thomson Foundation Gold Medal for his geographical work.

Towner's life membership was passed at a special meeting of members on Friday, 4 May, 1956. The Victoria Cross winner, along with others holding the highest award for valour, had been invited to London as part of the centenary celebrations. Before Towner left, the Club decided to honour him, and the award, with life membership. Not surprisingly, the meeting to do so was a mere formality. No discussion took place among the 22 members who attended; the motion was carried unanimously and the meeting ended eleven minutes after it began. Towner was respected in the Club; his bravery in wartime was unquestioned; his industry in peacetime was apparent. But he had had a hard life, had never married and reportedly did not have the capacity to make friends easily. The life membership was a fitting reward to a courageous soldier and in keeping with the objects of his Club.

* * *

The internal workings of the Club came under close examination at a meeting on 30 April, 1956. Captain Jim Yates raised the point that the committee, and only the committee, should appoint sub-committees. Furthermore, said Yates, no action should be taken on a sub-committee's recommendation until it has been voted on

*An assiduous search has failed to find any other member holding the VC; one likely candidate was thought to be Captain Harry Murray VC, whom owned a property near Hughenden after World War 1, but no record can be found of his membership.

by a full committee. Yates feared the possibility of what he called 'minority control', over such matters as 'pay, staff and other aspects of the club at present exercised by the full committee'. Captain Yates was worried about a situation that had arisen during a recent power strike, where a sub-committee had taken decisions - the detail of which do not survive - which should properly be exercised by the full committee. Although the president, by virtue of his office, was given the courtesy of selecting subcommittees, they had to have full committee approval to operate effectively. The Club bulletin was quoted as an example of a publication which was issued without the authority of the committee. Captain Yates wanted no further publication of the bulletin until its contents had been vetted by the full committee. Yates was president in the years 1962-63. Murray Adams recalls that he was a stickler for correct procedures and democracy.

In the 1950s, it was still illegal to open the Club on Anzac Day, as indeed, it was illegal for hotels to trade. This question had arisen earlier in the Club's history and indeed, is something of a recurring issue. Members felt unfairly treated that their Club could not trade on this 'one day of the year'. The Returned Services League, to use today's shorter title, was instrumental in obtaining this prohibition years earlier; the reasons are both spiritual and practical. The RSL always, and rightly, regarded Anzac Day as a day on which to remember the men and women who had made the sacrifices in war, but early Anzac Days also were marred by scenes of public drunkenness. Some committee members of the time felt, however, that the prohibition had outlived its usefulness. The issue was raised at the 30 April, 1956, meeting, five days after that year's Anzac Day. One committee member, Lieutenant R M Pendlebury, said full inquiries had been made about opening for meals and other refreshments. 'It was considered that, owing to the existing laws, no element of risk should be taken and there was no legal way in which the Club could be opened,' the minutes record. The committee was anxious to obey, not just the letter of the law, but also its spirit. One committee member suggested that a marquee be erected in the lower car park which was outside the licensed area. Lieutenant Pendlebury replied that, not only would the cost be prohibitive, but it would be outside the law.

Dress regulations continued to occupy the committee. Flight Lieutenant Tuckfield, a leading member of the cricket team, pointed out to committee members that Wednesday was sports afternoon. Many members who had played cricket, for example, in the afternoon liked to return to the Club for a drink. Tuckfield wanted the dress regulations relaxed to allow for cricketers to drink in the Club without first going home to shower and change. The house facilities sub-committee spent much time considering Tuckfield's eminently sensible suggestion. Its answers were formulated in terms of negative rules; standards of dress that were prohibited. These standards would have ruled out cricketers returning for a drink in their creams. Better, Tuckfield thought, that the Club lay down minimum standards. This was

done and remain largely unchanged to the present: Shirt with collar and tie and sleeves rolled down or short sleeves; long trousers with belt, but no braces; a tie or cravat must be worn at all times, other than with a safari jacket. For Tuckfield's colleagues, sports attire was permitted all day on Saturdays and Wednesday afternoon during the year, provided a tie or cravat was worn where a member did not wear a coat; where no tie or cravat was worn, a blazer, sports coat or other coat must be worn; long socks must be worn with shorts and at no time might a member enter the dining room without tie or cravat. With the decline of much organised sport, and with improved showering facilities at golf clubs, not to mention air conditioning, these rules have been modified, but only slightly. It is a shame that the Club's facilities could not run to a sportsman's bar, of the kind found in many messes, * but the committee was determined to preserve dress standards. Interestingly, the committee accepted then that officers in uniform will conform with the military dress regulations of the day. Today, of course, (although not then), an officer in Queensland wearing a tie is a rarity; all three services reserving ties virtually for ceremonial occasions only.

Among the distinguished visitors were Lieutenant General and Mrs Doolittle during the 1956 commemoration of the battle of the Coral Sea. James Doolittle had commanded the American Eighth Air Force in England towards the end of the war and had also taken part in the raids on Tokyo. Also that year, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck also visited the Club on 29 May. Auchinleck was a former Indian Army officer who commanded the Eighth Army after Field Marshal Lord Wavell and before Montgomery.** Not all the distinguished visitors to the Club were, however, former Allies.

The April 1955 bulletin awarded 'a pat on the back for his broadmindedness' to a member who brought 'as a guest to the Club a Hungarian Flying Officer who fought against us.' And, late in 1956, the Italian cruiser *Raimondo Montecucoli* was due to visit Brisbane on part of a goodwill mission. The Italians had, of course, been the enemy during the early years of the war until the overthrow of Mussolini's fascists. Australians, including many members of the Club, had fought against the Italians in the Western Desert; they were not regarded highly as soldiers, but the professionalism of their navy and their air force was certainly acknowledged. At the meeting on 24 September, 1956, the committee decided not to issue a formal invitation to the officers on board the Italian cruiser in the same way that formal invitations were issued, almost as a matter of course, to visiting ships from former Allies. But memories of the war had begun to recede and the subject came up for discussion again at the next meeting, in October.

*Including the superb officers mess at Land Warfare Centre, Canungra.

**Thanks to the work of historians such as Roger Parkinson, Auchinleck is now thought to have been unfairly treated by Winston Churchill and, in part at least, responsible for the early victories that led to el Alamein in 1942.

The Italian visit had been arranged between the two governments. By then, Australia was receiving large numbers of Italian migrants and trade links between the two nations were developing nicely. The refusal of the Club to issue a formal invitation to the Italians had been noticed in high places; the senior naval officer in Brisbane, no doubt acting on orders from his superiors, had approached the president. Would the Club reconsider its decision not to extend formal invitations to the Italians?

There were two issues involved. Firstly, the matter of Italians being former enemies. Flight Lieutenant Tuckfield pointed out that the Italians were now Allies* and a country with which we wished to trade. Secondly, and perhaps more cogently, Brigadier Amies said the Club would be wrong to ignore the visitors. But, the cautious accountant added, 'too many receptions were being given to visiting warships and we should not allow these to grow out of proportion'. The Club should be firm in framing a policy and take no outside dictation. This was a good point; receptions had been increasing and the costs were significant when accumulated. Finally the committee decided to hold a small reception for the captain of the *Raimondo Montecucoli* and four of his senior officers.

At the risk of being flippant, we will leave it to the reader to decide into which category - enemy or ally - fitted the Federal Cabinet which visited the Club in June, 1957. At this distance, we don't know how the visit came about; the minutes are silent until they mention a letter of thanks from Richard Casey, then Minister for External Affairs in the Menzies Government. However, we do know that the visit was apparently successful and that one member was disciplined for 'gate-crashing' what was essentially an invitation-only affair. Indeed, at the annual general meeting that year, the president told members there had been two cases of members 'gatecrashing' that year.** But the president added that the visit was an outstanding occasion in the social activities. Mr Casey had informed him that it was the first occasion on which all members of the Cabinet had accepted and attended a gathering of its kind and that they had liked coming here.

The Club hosted the new Governor, Sir Henry Abel Smith, for the first time on 8 April, 1958. Sir John Lavarack, the previous Governor had retired in September 1957 and died on 4 December; the Government had appointed Sir Henry Abel Smith as Governor. His April visit was the beginning of a long and happy association between Sir Henry and the Club. It was during Sir Henry's period as Governor that the annual Patron's Dinner - each Governor since then has occupied this position - was begun.

Certainly the Club continued to take seriously its social responsibilities. The 1956

*Although certainly not in any formal sense. Indeed, Italy had not yet joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

**Actually, it was the same member both times, a tough and resourceful infantry officer who was probably too tough and too resourceful for his own good.

Ball was popular and well-planned. The minutes record a meeting of the ball subcommittee on 23 May; the menu is worth reprinting in detail. Seafood cocktail, sweet and sour duck with fried rice and noodles, decorated sucking pigs, carved by uniformed chefs, fried chicken pieces, fried fillets of fish, meat croquettes, fish cakes, hot savouries, including sticks made from pieces of fillet of pork and fillet of veal, skewered together deep fried and served to guests, side platters of assorted meats and garden salads, nuts, raisins and fresh fruit, ice cream novelties, lettuce, cheese and biscuits, tea and coffee. In those pre-cholesterol conscious days, the preponderance of fried food was more than popular; the menu would horrify a modern dietician.

From time to time, the committee had to deal with unruly behaviour. May, 1956, was such a time. Some young army officers, on leave from a course at the then Jungle Training Centre at Canungra, made a block accommodation booking through Northern Command. These young officers returned late one night, and found the front doors closed. Favoursing a direct approach to this little difficulty, they 'opened' the doors, doing some damage in the process. The matter came to the attention of the committee; the minutes suggest that at least some members of the committee were sufficiently angry to ban block bookings by Northern Command for three months. However, acting on a suggestion by Lieutenant Colonel Don Kerr, the president wrote to the general, pointing out the committee's displeasure. No doubt the general took the necessary steps to ensure that the rules of the Club were obeyed by officers accommodated at the request of Northern Command. At the same time, the committee heard a report about a visitor to the Club; it, too, is worth reporting in detail, although prudence suggests that the name of the visitor be deleted.

Captain Richards said he and Lieutenant G H Job were standing near the fire at the end of the bar when Mr B----- entered the bar. He invited Mr B----- to join them as it appeared he was on his own. Within fifteen minutes Mr B----- was abusive to both Captain Richards and Lieutenant Job who then left him on his own. He attempted to join the Legacy members with Lieutenant Colonel Marsh and interfered with their group, pushing himself into their party and acting in an aggressive manner. During this time two ladies' names were mentioned by Mr B----- in a most insulting way. Mr B----- then fell to the floor and was assisted from the club by a steward. Captain Richards gave it as his opinion that the conduct and language of Mr B----- was most offensive and unbecoming. Captain Yates who had entered the bar during this period... Captain Yates was informed by Captain Richards that the person named was creating a disturbance amongst the Legacy members. Captain Yates asked Mr B----- for his name and his qualifications to be on the club premises. Mr B----- became offensive and was asked to leave, to which Mr B----- replied with abusive language. When informed by Captain Yates that, as a member of the committee, he would report Mr B-----, Mr B----- broke down. He was then taken outside by a steward and put in a taxi and sent to Lennons Hotel.

The next day, the troublesome Mr B----- returned to the Club for lunch, unaware of his performance the previous night. He was quickly informed about it; the gap in his memory was now filled. Mr B----- apologised, but the committee wrote to his parent club, the Imperial Service of Sydney, with details of the unfortunate behaviour. That club wrote back and at the following meeting, the matter was discussed again. Lieutenant Colonel J E Staley asked to be heard on the subject. Staley had been approached by a member of the Imperial Service Club, Brigadier Sir Frederick Galleghan.* Mr B----- had apparently been a prisoner of the Japanese during the war. 'Blackjack' Galleghan, ever mindful of the welfare of his officers and men, was now interceding on his behalf. Galleghan had told Staley Mr B-----'s behaviour was undoubtedly due to 'war neurosis and that it devolved on all of us to help people like these rehabilitate themselves'. That argument, however, did not get much of a sympathetic hearing; the minutes record: 'Lieutenant Colonel Kerr** said that he had many occasions in which he dealt with people suffering from war neurosis, but this could not be a defence for improper conduct'. Kerr had also been a prisoner of the Japanese but clearly had little sympathy for the unfortunate Mr B-----. The meeting resolved to do nothing about lifting its ban on Mr B----- unless formally approached to do so by the Imperial Service Club. At this distance, the decision seems harsh. Although more than a decade after the war, Mr B----- was still clearly still affected by his terrible experiences. This was not merely a case of another obnoxious drunk; the attempt at intercession by Galleghan and Staley suggest that Mr B-----'s behaviour, while inexcusable, was understandable and certainly forgivable.

* * *

In July 1956, the price of Scotch whisky was increased by one penny a nip. Lieutenant Colonel Little, then still a committee member, asked why this has happened without first being referred to the committee. The secretary, very reasonably, pointed out that previous price changes notified to the Club by the United Licensed Victuallers Association (ULVA) had been automatically adjusted in the wine and spirits department. This automatic adjustment, however, did not please the committee. On the motion of Brigadier Amies, prices in bar and lounge areas were not to be adjusted until after they had been approved by the House Facilities subcommittee. In the bottle shop, ULVA prices were to apply. Here, once again, it seems that decision, which properly should have been those of a manager, were being

*'Black Jack' Galleghan, so called because of his slight West Indian ancestry, was a much loved commanding officer of the 2/ 30th Battalion during World War II and a fierce fighter for the rights of prisoners of war.

**Major General DR Kerr was, as a battery commander in the 2/10th Field Regiment captured at the fall of Singapore.

referred to a sub-committee, an unwieldy and cumbersome way of doing business. But the secretary was not a manager, an important issue to the committee of the day, which reserved the right to change prices for itself. After all, it was going to bear the criticism of members. Certainly whisky was a matter of some importance, particularly to Little, whose consumption was generous without any apparent ill-effects. The 1958 annual report recorded how difficult it was to obtain.

Unfortunately, good Scotch whisky is in short supply and all efforts to increase our quota have been in vain. During the past year, there has been some criticism by members of the standard of the Scotch served in the Club, but it must be realised that when orders are placed of the magnitude of ours, the suppliers will give us only a percentage of the order in the best brands. In order to obtain the quantity we require, we must of necessity take a proportion of inferior brands.

Whisky is still an important issue in the Club, although happily the supply situation has improved immensely. * * * Although prosperous, in many ways the mid-1950s were challenging years for the Club. Although profits from bar trading still were strong, the dining room was running at a loss and operating margins were being trimmed. On 27 August, 1956, a special general meeting was called to vote on a proposal to increase subscriptions: City members would, if the motion was passed, pay seven guineas, an increase of two guineas; country members would pay four guineas, an increase of one guinea. The chairman, Major Murphy, told the meeting that the proposal to increase subscriptions might have come as a shock to members, but it was no shock to the committee. It had been keeping a close watch on the trading surplus, which was declining. Steady rises in wages, food, rates, power and light, bank interest, gas and licence fees, had been apparent and, although the committee was reluctant to pass on costs to members, the time had come for a subscription increase. In particular, capital improvements had come from past profits, but the situation had now arrived where existing subscriptions and profit covered only fixed charges, such as the redemption of bank overdraft and debentures. Major Murphy's motion was seconded by Brigadier Wilson, who told the meeting he had initially been opposed to the idea of a fee increase but, after studying the financial position, had come to the conclusion that it was inevitable. Both Murphy and Wilson must have been persuasive speakers, with good arguments, because only three other speakers took the floor, all to support the fee increase, and it was carried unanimously. Even at seven guineas, the membership

was remarkably reasonable and there was no doubt that, of all the service clubs in Australia, the United Service Club in Brisbane offered value for money.*

In October, 1957, the finance sub-committee had before it a proposal that Colonel C G Gehrman should write a history of the Club. It was one of those good ideas, seemingly before its time. The minutes make no further mention of the project; no manuscript has ever been found; Colonel Gehrman's son, 'Gus' Gehrman has no knowledge of the project and C G Gehrman died two years later. Sadly, no real effort was made to retain the essential source material for such a history, apart from the minutes. All the Club's valuable correspondence, for example, and many other important records have been lost over the years. Future historians, working on the second hundred years, will find their tasks are made easier by the collection now underway of this essential material. Occasionally it is clear that relationships between sub-committees and the full committee were strained, to say the least. Take, for example, the 1958 annual report to members by the president, Wing Commander George Christensen, and particularly the section dealing with the library and reading room, a pet project area of Little going back more than a decade. The report is blandness itself:

During the year it was decided to investigate the library arrangements in the club and a special library sub-committee consisting of Lieutenant Colonel Staley, Brigadier Kappe and Major Murphy was formed, and this committee has put in a tremendous amount of work investigating all angles of the Library problem and also the question of the Reading Room. Several changes were suggested and tried, but the whole question appeared to be hampered by lack of space. It has now been decided that until such time as additional space becomes available, either in the Green House or in the present Club premises, the library will be housed in the Radio Room on the second floor. This will then give considerable extra space in the reading room, which will accommodate almost double the number of chairs that are possible at present, and furthermore, it will eliminate the question of persons wishing to obtain library books disturbing those in the reading room.

The blandness of the report, however, disguises the reality. At the committee meeting on 28 July, it had been decided, somewhat peremptorily as it happened, to relocate the library in the radio room. In protest, the entire library sub-committee resigned; 'It is most disappointing,' they wrote in their letter of resignation, 'that just when their work was about to produce desirable results, they find their efforts have been completely nullified. It is to be understood that these resignations have not resulted from pique on the part of the signatories who believe that the action of the committee will result in a great dis-service to members generally'. It was only after a

*And still does. The United Service Club is, on both entrance fees and subscriptions, the lowest of the 'great' clubs of Australia, service or other.

great deal of tactful handling between meetings that the library sub-committee was prepared to withdraw its resignation and work towards a harmonious solution of what seemed to be an intractable problem. Some of the committee were conscious of the growing role of the United Service Institute as the military history reference point and library in Queensland; and were happy to defer to this situation, bearing in mind also the Club's problems with space (continuing in 1992) for a modern library.

The Future of the Green House

The 1960s began with the Club's committee wrestling with the problem of what to do with the Green House. The 1959 annual report noted that the Moreton Club, which had rented the premises until mid-1959, had now moved to its own premises in Oxlade Drive, New Farm. 'It is fitting to record what a good tenant and neighbour the Moreton Club has been in the years that have passed since our move from George Street,' wrote Lieutenant Colonel Kerr in that year's report to members. The committee had been expecting the move and had been examining a number of propositions for the future use of the building. It had already had a proposal from a property developer, John D Booker Pty Ltd. This company had put before the Green House sub-committee a proposal for development of the site and drawings to illustrate its ideas. The site was to be redeveloped as a 'Medical Arts Centre' to continue the spread of medical practitioners along what had already then become a medical specialists precinct. As well, another possible developer, the architects Moulds and MacMinn,* submitted an idea for the site, but at this stage, not having sufficient detail to enable the sub-committee to do more than discuss it in broad outline. None of these proposals survive, but apparently the Booker proposal would have allowed the Club only a floor and terrace of the new building on the Green House site. In the process, however, the Club would lose the title to the land on which the building stood and would have to enter a lease agreement which would permit the building of parking facilities. As equity, the Club was to receive floor space in the new building.

One of the prime considerations in these proposals was the future space requirements. This was by no means clear, for the general use by members had declined since the 'boom' years immediately after World War II. Moreover the Moreton Club had been a useful tenant and now the Club had to contend with the loss of revenue from the rental. The Green House building was regarded then as obsolescent and in need of heavy maintenance expenditure. The minutes recorded:

Proposals, therefore, are now being examined which are essentially of a capital nature and forward looking; that is to say, it is hoped to place before members a scheme whereby

*Major MacMinn had been a former committee member and president.

a new building can be erected on this very valuable site and which will remain under Club control with prospects of revenue accruing therefrom. It is felt that unless an exceptional cash offer was received for the site, and such proceeds could be diverted to the improvement of our existing premises, thoughts of present revenue should be subordinated to a sound scheme for development of this splendid site in the future as a coordinated plan.

As usual, the blandness of the annual report disguises the existing tensions over the idea. These proposals were put to members at a special meeting on 21 August, 1959, well attended by 128 members, with 12 apologies. The immediate background to the meeting was that the Green House sub-committee had met, considered the Booker proposals, sought legal advice and decided to recommend to the full committee that the proposal be put to members at a special meeting. The sub-committee, led by Major Murphy, had a series of discussions with the developer, John D Booker.

It was not until 13 July 1959, that the sub-committee learned that Booker's proposal did not include a full floor for the Club, as originally thought. John Booker, who attended a special meeting of the executive sub-committee on this night, did not supply a scaled plan, of the layout of the Club's entitlement, although he promised to do so. The subcommittee members were quite adamant; no proposal that did not provide a complete floor to become 'the property of the Club as equity for the surrender of tide of the land involved' would get their support, although no formal motion was put.

At the special meeting, the Booker plan was discussed at length. Major Murphy told the meeting that the Moreton Club had been offered the site, but had declined and moved to New Farm. Already the Club had looked at converting the building to its own use, rather than as rented premises. To do so, however, would have meant complying with additional and more onerous requirements of the Brisbane City Council; temporary alterations were both expensive and beyond the Club's ability to fund. Multiple ownership of sites - so-called strata title - was beginning to be popular; this presented certain opportunities and the John D Booker proposal had been received. All the committee was seeking at this stage was a motion to enter a contract with Booker which would have provided the Club with essential financial and legal safeguards while re-developing a site that was then without a major tenant and likely to become a financial burden.

This was not good enough for the members. Led by Captain J J Rowell, (later Sir John) a prominent Brisbane solicitor, members criticised the committee for putting forward the motion. It was clear that the members were vehemently opposed to any proposal that would see the site sold and what they regarded as inadequate safeguards and conditions. That ended, effectively, the Booker proposal and the committee was now forced to look at renting the Green House and retaining the building.

No sooner, however, had the members dismissed the Booker proposal, than it seems that the Green House sub-committee was back with another proposition from another major developer of the time, Reid Murray. Here, the sub-committee had as its task working towards a building on the site 'of much less pretentious proportions and with the thought that such a basic structure could be added to over the years, either for the use of the Club or as a source of future rental income'. The sub-committee looked at the proposition and found that erecting such a building was not economic. It had met with the Queensland manager of Reid Murray, which came up with the proposition of building for the Club,

... to the Club's design and satisfaction, a modern air-conditioned and appropriately fitted building WITHOUT COST TO THE CLUB having separate entrance, lifts and service lift facilities, floor space of not less than the Club's present built-over area, or 36,000 square feet, whichever is the greater, reserved car parking space for not less than 130 vehicles ...

As well, Reid Murray was apparently prepared to offer a number of other attractive conditions, including undisturbed use of the premises, separate title, and an architect of the Club's choosing. The sub-committee urged an immediate approach to Reid Murray on the terms and conditions that had been set out in the initial discussions. But Reid Murray's early enthusiasm for the project waned somewhat; the next meeting heard that, despite a formal approach from the Club, nothing more had been heard from the potential developers John D Booker and Reid Murray. Now, however, LJ Hooker was interested in the site.

By September that year, the committee was hearing reports that the developers were now not interested. Brisbane, it seemed then, was 'not large enough for a development on the scale envisaged'. And so the Green House remained in its existing form, which it retains to the present day. Here, no doubt, the Club was materially assisted by the economic conditions of the early 1960s, which saw then a Federal Government-imposed credit squeeze that sent many property developers into difficulties. Ironically the three developers mentioned in the Club's minutes at this time - John D Booker, Reid Murray and L J Hooker - all ran into later financial difficulties, although Hooker had its difficulties much later than the other two, being a casualty of the 1980s.

No doubt it was someone else's financial difficulties that gave the Club an offer which the committee must have found amusing. In November, 1962, a real estate agent approached the Club with a proposal that was as optimistic as it was absurd. Was the Club interesting in acquiring the Auto Service Co. site (presumably in Upper Edward Street.) The price, according to the agent, was '£120,000 or offer'. As the minutes note, 'The secretary was instructed to advise the vendor that the Club was not interested

in the purchase'. It was a price that had more optimism than value attached.

But the Club had its own problems just in dealing with the site. A measure of the difficulties being faced in deciding how to use what was then - and remains today - extremely valuable premises can be determined from the notes in the Midwinter Bulletin for 1960.

The 'Building next door' is once more fully occupied - not only by ourselves, but with tenants using portion of the Green House as professional rooms and offices. Thus a useful source of revenue is restored to the Club.* Your committee is very aware of the tremendous potential of our Club site and the ultimate future of the Club itself. With these ends in view, a thorough examination of proposals for the future development of the Club is being conducted by the Committee with co-opted advice of professional and technical experts. It is hoped to be able to give full details and recommendations concerning this planning to members at the annual meeting, if not before.

It proved to be an optimistic hope. The minutes of meeting simply record that the future of the Green House had yet to be decided and that Major Murphy, convenor of the sub-committee was thanked for his efforts. Later, however, the Green House figures again in the minutes, for the meeting of 28 May, 1962:

The secretary reported that, in spite of all precautions to the contrary, undesirable persons were still sleeping under the Green House. He considered that, because of the fire danger involved, the area should be enclosed to prevent unauthorised entry.

As a result, the underneath area of the Green House was enclosed, although not with the original expensive material suggestion and the 'undesirable person' were forced to sleep elsewhere.

This was a time for cautious budgeting. Even before the credit squeeze, in the late 1950s, the Club was in a condition of some financial stringency. Within a couple of years, the Club had gone from a very comfortable financial position to one which required some care and tight budgeting. At the meeting on 2 March, 1959, Brigadier Amies said the finances of the Club had taken a turn for the worse and future decisions on spending had to be watched closely. The bar, for example, was trading below expectations; bar stock had gone missing and the chef had been forced to return from holidays to sort out problems in the kitchen. Accommodation figures were also declining; in short the Club had to watch its spending. Under these circumstances, he thought the proposed purchase of property in Edward Street was not such a good idea and his sub-committee - finance - had recommended that the proposed purchase, for £9000, be dropped.

*Useful, of course, following the moving out of the Moreton Club

This meeting neatly illustrates the competing pressures on the committee. When Brigadier Amies sat down, Flight Lieutenant Tuckfield, chairing the house sub-committee got to his feet, with precisely the opposite view. The Club needed to spend money, he said. Alterations to the top bar were a high priority, as was a cold room. His sub-committee could see the immediate need to spend at least £3000. Brigadier Amies stressed that the Club needed to obtain what the minutes record as a 'firm quote' to cover these alterations. The minutes go on: 'It was resolved that resentment by the committee be conveyed to the president.' Presumably this was resentment by the house sub-committee at the conflict over finances. Not for the first time - nor, indeed, the last - was the question of money causing some problems. As always, the conflict was between those who wanted to spend money and those who did not. In the process of reaching decisions, however, this committee meeting managed to submerge its resentment sufficiently to vote for a larger car park space for the president, a more prominent sign and a fence.

The Club also experienced other trading problems. Early in March, 1960, the finance sub-committee gloomily reported that the trading accounts revealed 'a most unsatisfactory state of affairs. The figures for the bar have only one interpretation. The secretary reported that he had dispensed with the services of three stewards'. In future, stocktakes were done daily, sadly a necessary precaution with casual labour.

The last annual general meeting of the 1950s was held on 25 November, 1959. It noted the 'sterling work' done by the late Colonel C G Gehrman, who had given so much of his life to the Club. This meeting also noted the death of Lieutenant Colonel J E Staley, who died while a member of the committee.

The future of the Green House, still in the air at this time, and the library, were inextricably linked. It seems that, given the extraordinary time taken to make some of these decisions, that the Club was missing some drive and direction on the committee or perhaps it was just a time for more caution and for consolidation. Certainly the question of the Club's future, with apparent declining rates of growth in membership, was a continuing concern. The library, however, posed special problems.

The minutes for that last annual meeting of the 1950s also include a letter from Major R Jackson, complaining about the state of the library which was then closed. Jackson wrote that he had left Brisbane five years before. On his return, he found the library had fallen on what he called 'evil days'. He offered to help, an offer accepted with alacrity by the committee. Jackson's complaints were well-founded; successive committees had attempted to come to grips with the problems in the library but had got nowhere. Books were missing; about 2600, according to Jackson. 'The library was, and still is, quite useless, and, however, annoying it may be, its present closure cannot be avoided, in my opinion,' he wrote. After much work, Jackson recommended that the library be closed, the remaining books sent to Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital.

But if the library was to re-open, Jackson recommended that an attendant be present whenever the library was opened to members. Quite clearly he did not trust the members to borrow books and return them.

The members at the annual meeting shared Jackson's concern. They directed the committee to give 'full consideration to the problems of the library'. But they believed that retention of the library was desirable but until suitable accommodation was found, it would not be reasonable to reopen the facility for members. But despite the feeling at the meeting, the library was not a high priority for the new committee. By now, television had begun to make an impact and members had other distractions in the evening. The Club's library, like so many similar institutions, was a casualty of the early television days.

Although the Club was a very early pioneer in having ladies as members, its members in 1960 still retained an old-fashioned, perhaps even chauvinistic, attitude towards ladies. At a committee meeting in January, 1960, the president, Wing Commander Christensen, expressed his disapproval at the fact that ladies had been entertained at a function held by the Royal Flying Doctor Service. This, the president said, was not an 'authorised' ladies night; the minutes record that 'the secretary was instructed to convey to the member responsible an expression of the committee's disapproval.

However, soon afterwards the committee experimented with a mixed dining night, this time for members connected with the Mater Hospital. The committee qualified its approval with the following: 'Entrance to be provided *only* [emphasis in the original] through the 'Green House' and the coffee lounge to be suitably screened off'. Added the committee; 'Any similar departure from the normal Club custom in regard to entertaining ladies be referred to the full Committee for consideration'. The first cracks had begun to appear in the facade of masculine domination.

Another stalwart, Brigadier Jack Amies, resigned from the committee early in 1960. Brigadier Amies felt that he had made a major contribution to the Club and now it was time to concentrate on new ventures. His wise counsel, his careful approach to financial matters, his leadership with Little during the acquisition of 'Montpelier' his military and business acumen all made Jack Amies an extremely valuable club man. At about the same time as Brigadier Amies resigned, the Club also lost the services of Major Steele as secretary. Lieutenant Colonel N E Aley, then assistant secretary, was appointed to take Steele's place.

The first Patron's dinner was held in 1959. It was decided in 1960 that, due to the success of the second - a letter of thanks having been received from the patron, His Excellency Sir Henry Abel Smith - then consideration should be given to making this an annual event. At first, it seemed there were some complaints from members about the order of dress laid down - white tie or mess kit, both of which would have been

Exceedingly warm in September - but as the Midwinter Bulletin for 1960 pointed out, 'it was felt that a standard had to be set, and dress problems were easily solved'. In 1960, the function was held on Monday, 5 September; the General Officer Commanding, Northern Command had given permission for officers to wear tropical mess kit.*

There seems no doubt that the early 1960s was a highly social time for the Club; more than 20 separate functions were listed, with monthly dinner dances, a ball, the Exhibition Week 'at home', cricket dinners and frequent billiards and snooker matches against other clubs. But this year was also a period of economic recession and a Government-induced credit squeeze. The president, Lieutenant Colonel Kerr, who had been elected president at the previous annual meeting, noted in the Midwinter Bulletin for that year:

From the time of my assuming duties as your President, most business has felt the effect of the credit squeeze. The main effect on the Club has been on membership which is showing a steady decline. However, it is pleasing to report, that due to increased support from members, increased efficiency and economies in administration whilst still maintaining the high standard for which the club is noted, there has been a very satisfactory improvement in the club's financial position.

That, in the height of a tough credit squeeze, was no mean achievement. It was also an indication of the amenities which the Club provided for its members; a simple list will indicate what was available, even then: Main dining room and snack bar, with take-away meals 'suitably packed in pyrex or pottery dishes, served hot for the member to take home'; private parties; ladies night (Thursday night); a dinner dance on the last Thursday of the month; wine tasting; bottle department; car parking; accommodation; social functions; Anzac Day; cricket; billiards and snooker. Membership at this time stood at more than 2500 with the committee always anxious to sign on new, eligible people. And, in terms of convenience, the Club offered 'an electric shaver ... A mirror and power point have been installed in the ground floor wash room, so if you have an evening appointment and time presses, a few minutes at the Club will ensure your being able to face the evening with confidence'.**

Since the end of World War II, the Club has offered temporary membership facilities to serving officers visiting Brisbane on duty. This was a sensible arrangement, for Brisbane at the time was home to an infantry battalion, a field regiment,

*Today, winter mess dress has, virtually disappeared from Queensland and the white cotton mess jacket is worn the year round. 'Tropical' mess kit, sometimes known as 'Red sea rig', consists of a white short-sleeved shirt, no tie and mess kit trousers and cummerbund. This was decidedly not the 'tropical kit' referred to in 1960. The Club still specifies winter mess kit for formal occasions in winter.

**An elegantly phrased note from an anonymous author- perhaps Commander Eric Feldt- even down to the correct use of the possessive case before the gerund - 'your being able to'.

several major headquarters, with other army facilities, such as the Jungle Training Centre (as the Land Warfare Centre was then known) at Canungra, * nearby. As well, the naval use of Brisbane port was substantially greater then than today while Amberley RAAF base attracted many officers passing through.

The Club offered these officers facilities similar to their messes and wardrooms - perhaps even better - but at prices lower than comparable hotels were charging. Occasionally boisterous exuberance on the part of younger officers led to trouble but the arrangement worked well and to the advantage of the Club.

In late 1962, changes to the Club's rules made it doubtful that this comfortable arrangement could continue legally. The secretary, Lieutenant Colonel Aley, raised the issue at the December 1962 meeting. Initially the mood of the meeting was that the heads of the three services in Brisbane be told of the recent rule changes** and advised that officers who were not members of reciprocal clubs were now not eligible to stay at the Club.

While obeying the letter of the rules, a successful motion along these lines would have deprived the Club of much useful custom, both in accommodation and, with the thirsts of younger officers, in bar takings. Wiser counsel prevailed. Lieutenant Colonel Little and Major Murphy combined to give the secretary power to admit serving officers as 'temporary members for a period not exceeding seven days'.

Although the annual reports and minutes reflect a jaunty optimism within the committee, trading figures were down. Brisbane, like the rest of Australia, was suffering from the effects of the credit squeeze; the Club's trading was not immune. In April 1963, for example, the house sub-committee discussed the decline in trading figures, but noted that 'it is generally agreed that the position reflected the general trend of business in Brisbane during the period January to March 1963'. Then, as now, recessions and credit squeezes have immediate and damaging impacts upon disposable incomes; Club trading was very much a question of members' disposable incomes.

Still, it was a time for cautious purchases. The committee decided that an investment in a circular dining table would be worthwhile. Such a table, of the kind where, as the minutes record, 'members entering the dining room alone could foregather' would benefit the Club and 'add prestige to the dining room'. The local furniture firm of Harvey Brothers was thought to make suitable tables. At length the committee discussed types of wood, size and so on. Finally the committee decided:

*Many serving officers were members of the Club. In November 1955, the Bulletin wished members of the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, 'good luck on its departure for overseas service in peacetime'. The 'peacetime' was relative, of course; 2RAR was the first battalion to serve in what later became known as the Malayan Emergency.

**Adopted at a meeting in September which was, according to that year's annual report, very poorly attended. Only 27 members, of whom 14 were committee members, bothered to come to the meeting .

Quotations would be obtained for three types of tables, ranging from £110 to £150. It was thought that such a table might help attract members to the dining room, improve trade and offset some of the trading problems which had arisen in recent months. At the time of writing, the circular dining table is in the television room, although the idea of having such a table, for members dining alone, remains attractive.

It is clear from the surviving accounts at this time that trading was quite depressed and the committee was struggling with attempts to improve the position. As was so often the case, the committee seemed to divide neatly into two groups - one which thought that, by spending money on material improvement, trading would pick up; the other believing that additional spending would not result in additional patronage. But there were improvements that simply had to be done; the kitchen in the early 1960s was creaking at the seams and plainly unable to cope with the peak demands put upon it.

One of those demands came from organisations which had members in common and which saw advantage in holding dinners and other similar functions at the Club. One such professional organisation with which the Club has enjoyed a long association was - and is - the Australian Dental Association. In 1964, however, the committee had been forced to tell the association that its members could not use the facilities that year. 'The presence of a female member of the association' had been detected at the previous year's dinner; this, in the climate of the time, simply would not do. Earlier it was the Royal Flying Doctor Service which had attracted attention, now it was the Australian Dental Association. By 1965* attitudes were beginning to change, or perhaps it was that the committee realised that business was business. Lieutenant Colonel Richard Cameron told the meeting that he, at least, was in favour of the dentists holding their annual dinner at the Club. This was a small break-through, but within months, the declining trading position, not to mention the growing acceptance of females in such establishments, forced the Club to reconsider its position. Reconsider, mind, rather than change.

The dining room was poorly used during the week, with the exception of Tuesday and Thursday nights. Why this should be so is something of a mystery. On the motion of Flight Lieutenant Izatt the committee discussed the idea that ladies might be admitted to the Club dining room 'between the hours of 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as the usual Thursday night Dinner Dance'. The motion was lost on a show of hands but it was clear that times were changing. Wives were beginning to ask their husbands why they could not use the dining room as well. As the Midwinter Bulletin of 1965 noted:

*This was the year that a female university tutor chained herself to the public bar of the Regatta Hotel, Toowong, in protest over the licensing laws which refused females permission to enter such bars.

One thing which we lack and which is being considered by your committee is a room in which members may entertain their wives either for a drink or a meal. This amenity would be an advantage to country members who visit Brisbane with their wives. At present there is nowhere in the Club that a member can bring his wife other than on a Thursday evening or to a special function. Use can be made of the Green House for this purpose and the main Club building will not be affected.

That same circular also addressed the difficult, and continuing, questions of the future and the fees, two issues of fundamental importance to members. Brigadier McEachern, the Club's president, told members it had often been suggested that the Club had a limited future because of the 'increasing age of those members who became eligible during the 1939-45 war'. Said McEachern forcefully: 'I cannot and will not accept this view. In my opinion the Club can retain its present membership and even increase it for many years yet to come'. McEachern was an optimistic and far-sighted president; his optimism, however, hardly proved to be justified. On the other, difficult question - that of fees - the committee had been wrestling with this problem and sought the following figures: £12/10/- a year for town members; £7/10/- a year for country members and £2 a year for remote members with a further fee of £1/- a year. They were modest increases, but the Club was also under pressure from its bankers at the time.

A special general meeting was called on 16 June, 1965, to pass proposals for the increase in the Club's subscriptions. This meeting is worth noting in some detail, because it gives a fascinating insight into the thinking at the pre-decimal currency, pre-double-digit inflation times.

The meeting began at 8 p.m. No doubt many of the 47 members attending had gathered earlier, some perhaps in the top bar, to prepare and fortify themselves for the momentous discussions that were to follow. Thus prepared and fortified, they settled down for this meeting. First, they were told by the vice-president, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Cameron that subscriptions had not increased for some six years. For this reason, if no other, an increase was justified. Besides, said Cameron bluntly, the committee had been forecasting improvements and these had to be paid for.

There was another problem; the bankers would agree to increasing the Club's overdraft only if fees were increased. That was fair enough; clearly the bankers had a good idea of the money going through the Club and the contributions being made by members. Cameron's arguments seemed persuasive enough; Major General Kerr, speaking later, pressed for higher entrance fees on the basis that new members coming into the Club were gaining the benefits of amenities provided by the efforts and funds of previous members.*

*It is a persuasive argument, and one used recently by another Brisbane club, Tattersall's to justify quite substantial increases in entrance fees and subscriptions. For example, entrance fees rose from \$250 to \$1000 and subscriptions from \$50 to \$250.

Other speakers put the view of younger members who had ‘yet to establish themselves in the commercial world’. Further issues were canvassed, including the then anomalous position of overseas members and allied members. Finally, in the discussion, the suggestion of a lower membership fee for members over 65 was put. In fact, these distinguished members enjoyed half-price fees; as the minutes record, 'The amendment was discussed very fully'. An hour and half later, the meeting ended; the fees were increased and the members present felt they had contributed greatly to the discussions.