



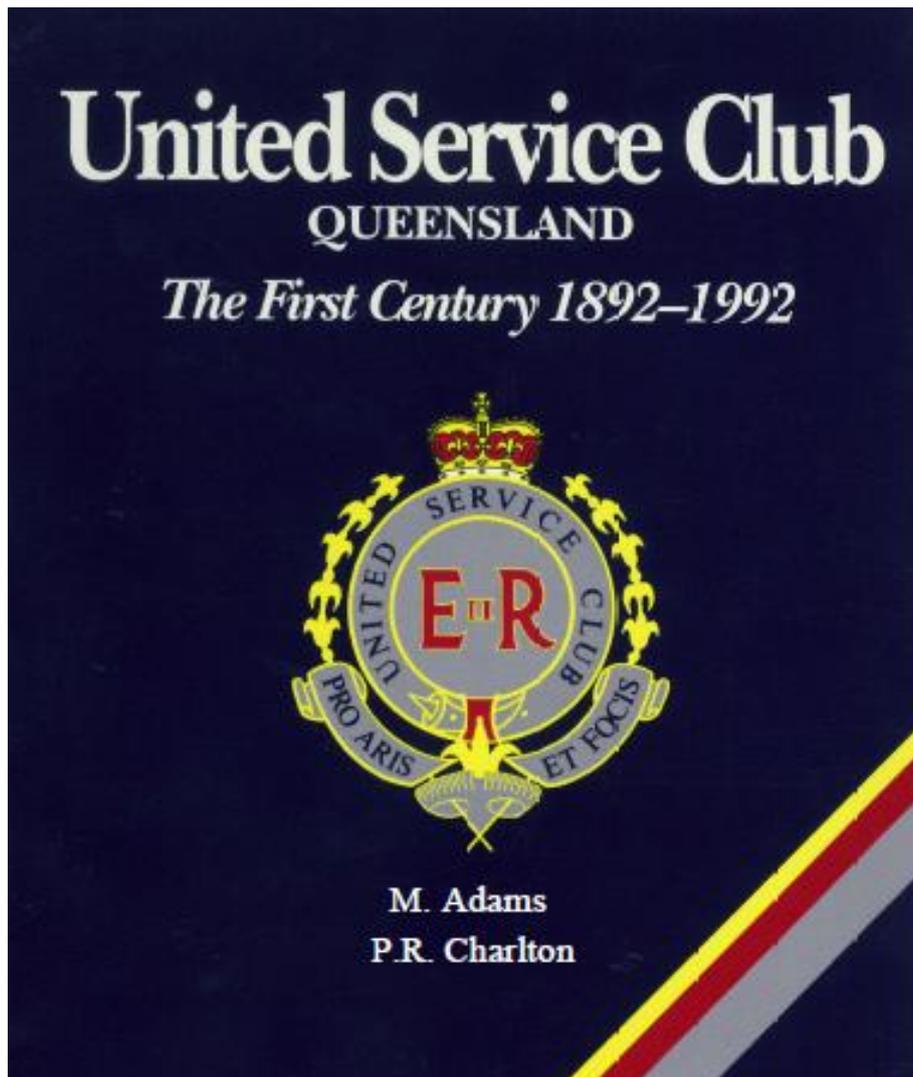
united service club

history & heritage notes

Club History 1892-1992

SECTION 2

(Chapters 4 to 6)



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.



Lieutenant Colonel Leonard Alfred Little MBE (1903–74). President 1945–46. Life Member 1947.

Part Two

CHAPTER FOUR

'Montpelier' is Bought

During July 1946, a well-disguised advertisement was placed in *The Courier-Mail*:

CONFIDENTIAL, inquiries for a city building to buy or lease, not less than 10,000 sq. ft. floor space bounded by North Quay, Botanic Gardens, Wickham Tce. & Petrie Bight. Full details covering price, rentals, annual charges in strictest confidence to CT 82, C Mail.

The advertisement produced a few answers and Little investigated the suggested properties. None of the buildings inspected after this advertisement, however, met the Club's requirements. The situation was becoming desperate when, in the street one day, Little met Major Maldwyn Davies, a Club member. Davies mentioned that his family owned a property in Wickham Terrace which might be suitable and added that he and his sister, a Mrs Dempster in Western Australia, were trustees of their father's estate. Davies told Little that he would accept a reasonable offer and would try to persuade his sister to sell if the Club was interested. Mrs Dempster, after some initial reluctance, eventually agreed to sell. Little, however, also needed to present the committee with an alternative choice.

On 3 July, 1946, after some solid work by the special sub-committee and as a result, too, of his own driving leadership, Little was able to report to the committee meeting that 'Beerwah' and 'Montpelier' were available as club premises. Lieutenant Colonel Jack Amies moved that the president be empowered to make all necessary enquiries regarding 'Montpelier'. Two months later, with Little in the chair, Amies reported on the financial valuation of 'Montpelier'. It was valued at £30,000; Amies, an accountant who had recently returned from the war and was establishing his own practice, prepared a detailed financial statement outlining the profits over the previous three years and, more importantly, expected profits.

Although the figures looked promising, there were still some doubters on the committee. One member, Lieutenant Colonel S L 'Sid' McIntyre complained that there was no information other than financial data on which to form a judgment. He wanted information about the buildings, how they would be converted to club use and how they would operate. As president, Little had the answers. He described the buildings, and added that the secretary of the Moreton Club had, only that day, made an inquiry about leasing the wooden building. The Moreton Club was Brisbane's

leading ladies club, a position it retains today from splendid premises in New Farm. Moreover, the only alterations necessary were the installation of a bar and billiard room. Apparently there were only small structural changes required. Little then read the information sheet for members, which was to be sent out with the notice of a general meeting.

As a building, 'Montpelier' had a fascinating background. William Davies, Maldwyn Davies' father, had made his fortune in Gympie during the gold mining years*. He bought the site, on which stood an old timber lodging house, in 1897, no doubt at an excellent price for the colony was then gripped by a severe depression and real estate values were extremely low. Then, in 1907, William Davies demolished the old house and erected a new brick structure of three stories, using first grade materials and good craftsmen. The contract price was £7000 and the building was designed specifically as a private hotel providing short and long term accommodation for gentlemen and their ladies. As a private hotel, 'Montpelier' had the highest standards for clientele, even decades later; the late Roderick S Colquhoun, the first Queensland manager for The Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited, stayed at 'Montpelier' for a few weeks in 1938 while looking for a permanent residence. Colquhoun later recalled that his reservation was not accepted until he had arranged a recommendation by a well-known businessman.

William Davies first leased 'Montpelier' to Thomas A Morgan, then in 1910 to Annie Mabel Forsyth and then, in 1940, to Mary Kathleen 'Molly' Sheahan, a formidable lady from a well-known Stanthorpe hotel family. Miss Sheahan had been private secretary to R M King, Secretary (as ministers were then known) for Public Works and Public Instruction in the Queensland Government between 1929 and 1932. R M King was also the father of two 50 year United Service Club members, barrister Major R R M 'Rex' King QC and Major H M 'Harry' King. Miss Sheahan was also the aunt of retired Supreme Court judge, Charles D Sheahan.

Sometime in 1942, 'Montpelier' was requisitioned by the US military forces as accommodation for officers of field rank, but remained under the management of Miss Sheahan. One of the long-term residents of this period was a Colonel Johnston, personal physician to General Douglas MacArthur. Another officer who stayed for about eight months around this time was Brigadier-General Robert N. Van Bolkemberg, who commanded the 40th Coast Anti Aircraft Brigade. Van Bolkemberg was reported to have had a high regard for the fighting qualities of Australian troops. One of his officers, Lieutenant Colonel Irwin Brown, recalled on a post-war visit to Brisbane that there were several long tables in the dining room and the normally informal American officers remained standing until their general was seated. Brown

*Unlike Melbourne, Brisbane did not enjoy a huge building boom following prosperity on nearby gold fields. The surviving Victorian and Edwardian buildings, such as 'Montpelier', do not provide a glimpse of the architectural styles of those days.

also remembered that 'Montpelier' was a well-made building with a long verandah on the second floor which gave, in those days, a view of the river. The features which Brown remembered were all qualities which attracted Little to the building.

On Lieutenant Colonel Amies' motion, amending a preceding motion, the committee decided to proceed with negotiations to buy 'Monpelier' for £30,000, subject to confirmation by a general meeting. Authorisation was also given for the expenditure of another £20,000 on conversions and furnishings. The crucial committee meeting had lasted one hour and 15 minutes. Little, a no-nonsense man of action, might well have anticipated the decision of a special general meeting. Captain J K Kempthorne recalled that Little had earlier accepted the offer by Major Davies to sell, on behalf of the estate of William Davies, the building at 173-183 Wickham Terrace, to the club for £30,750. Little gave his personal guarantee to the Bank of New South Wales pending approval by the special general meeting. As president, Little put himself somewhat ahead of both the committee and the membership.

That general meeting was held within the month, on 30 September, 1946, and was attended by 165 members. The notice was signed by Eric A Feldt as the club secretary. Commander Feldt had won distinction as a coastwatcher during the war.*

The members were told that the Club was currently a tenant-at-will - a tenancy which may be terminated by either party without notice - of the Government. A move was clearly necessary; 'If the Club were dispossessed without alternative premises to move into, the result would be disastrous'. In the previous 12 months, the committee had investigated a number of possible alternative premises. These included: Glenrowan Hospital, Wickham Terrace; Coronation House, Creek Street; Commonwealth Bank Building, King George Square; St Luke's Hall, Charlotte Street; YWCA Building, Adelaide Street; Webster's Building, Mary Street; a property in Wharf Street, between Ann and Adelaide Street; ACB Building, Fortitude Valley; a property adjoining the Hotel Cecil, in George Street; McMur House, Edward Street; Desmond Chambers, Adelaide Street; 'Beerwah', opposite the Museum; Bayard's in South Brisbane; Naval House, Edward Street and 'Montpelier' in Wickham Terrace.

Such has been the pace of Brisbane's development in the past 20 years that few of these buildings still exist. Naval House in Edward Street would have been a splendid site, near the Gardens and at the other end of Alice Street from the Queensland Club. But that building was too small and lacked that essential accommodation which was a primary reason for the committee's choice. Similar problems existed with the other buildings, although 'Beerwah', opposite the old Museum, is still in use as a private hotel. However, it was then, and remains today, too far away from the business district to be suitable as a club.

*His account of the coastwatchers experiences, *The Coast Watchers* (Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1959) is a minor classic of wartime writing and has frequently been reprinted.

The members were given the committee's recommendation. 'Of these, the only property recommended by the committee is "Montpelier",' they were told. It was on a prime location, for the site could not be built out,* it was within easy tramming distance of the city, and, most importantly, it provided ample parking space for cars.

Here, the committee's foresight is remarkable. No doubt many of the members owned motor cars in those early post-war years, but this decision was made even before the Australian manufacture of the Holden, and thus well before the motor car assumed its primacy of importance as a means of transport. 'Ample parking space' suggests that the committee understood, perhaps even instinctively, the potential of the motor car to change working, living and recreational patterns after the war. Now, of course, the 'ample parking space' has been made even more ample and is both a great convenience for members and a useful source of revenue. The 'tramming distance' was a reference to the tram which ran up Upper Edward Street and terminated - the turning circle is still visible - outside the Brisbane Grammar School.

Members were assured that the area of the proposed premises was large but, if it was found to be too large, the surplus could be disposed of. The two buildings - one of brick, one of timber - were in good condition and were suitable for conversion to Club uses within reasonable cost. If necessary, the timber building could be sold or leased without difficulty; already the committee had had an expression of interest from the Moreton Club.

As for the all-important question of finance, purchase and conversion of 'Montpelier' at a total outlay of £40,000, a price which could be met without increasing membership charges. There were, however, two important qualifications: Membership should not fall below 900 and that members should continue their Club. Assets stood at £11,000 in cash and securities, and another £9000 in land and buildings, which left £20,000 to be raised either by loan or by debentures. The committee's recommendation was that the £20,000 be raised by £10 debentures at four percent, issued to members. 'The virtue of this method is that, in the event of a depression, the Club will owe money to its members, not to an outsider,' the members were told.

The committee's caution is understandable and, after the events of the 1980s and the experiences of some other clubs,** highly laudable. In the post-war years, the shadow of that terrible depression of the 1930s was still long. Governments, both in Australia and overseas, were committing themselves to the goal of full employment; at the other end of the economic scale, club committees were consciously arranging their financial affairs to withstand another period of falling prosperity and rising

*An optimistic view; the splendid river views over the city and the River that so attracted Little have long been built out.

**Including the Imperial Service Club in Sydney.

unemployment. Equally, the committee's optimism that the membership would remain above 900 and that members would continue to offer their support was marked. But who was to say that, as the wartime officers returned to the demands of civilian life, to the ties of marriage and family, to the 'other hostages to fortune', that their time and motive for club life - so similar to war-time mess life - might not wane?

As attractions, the committee planned to use the tennis courts at the rear of the building, while noting there was ample room for squash courts. Apart from these facilities, the building could provide a large lounge, a dining room, a beer garden on the third floor and a residential section. 'In fact' members were assured, 'it can be made into what the United Service Club should be'.

The minutes for this all-important meeting are complete, and convey more than merely the motions and decisions. Colonel Hughes, as one of the trustees, strongly supported the proposal to buy 'Montpelier' and said so unequivocally. Other members seemed to agree with the proposal, but were interested in what income the Club might make from the leases still in force for the building. The lease still had 21 months to run, Little told the meeting, and an amount of not more than £1000 would be paid. Not surprisingly some of the members were concerned about the size of the loan and the Club's ability to trade sufficiently well to repay it, although one member voiced his objections on the grounds that the bar and the billiard room were to be situated on the second floor and, as there was only to be one lift, there would be too much congestion. Besides, he didn't like the idea of having to get a tram. This particular member, Major F L Jones, had a personal point. He had been admitted to membership in 1892 as a foundation member. At his advanced years, his objections were understandable. He wanted the committee to consider another building.

Major Jones was supported by Lieutenant Colonel G H G Smith,* admitted to membership in 1919, who said he was not convinced by the committee's financial projections. The profit margin, according to Smith, was not sufficient, but if this could be improved, then he would consider supporting the scheme. Other members with more recent experience of the Australian Imperial Force thought there was no doubt that profits would continue to improve. The minutes note the essence of the Club's decision at the time. They are worth recording in some detail:

Lt-Col Lang spoke refuting the remarks of Col. Smith. By association with the Second AIF he thought that members of good financial standing and in good jobs would continue membership. From personal knowledge the majority of junior members are of good financial standing, and as 2ndAIF men made their way they would join the Club, provided

*Smith, the Supreme Court librarian, was well-liked and well-respected. Flight Lieutenant The Honorable Sir Edward Williams remembers him as a pipe smoker, knowledgeable, a good friend to young barristers but careful by nature.

it was in suitable premises, but if we carried on in premises as at present the Club would not go ahead.

It is possible to detect a distinct difference between the Second AIF men and the bulk of older members who had served with the First AIF. Lang was in a perfect position to speak about both classes of members. He had joined the Club in 1937, as Captain J T Lang, MC. During World War I, he had served with both the 53rd Battalion of the AIF and the Indian Army. During World War II, Lang had risen to the rank of lieutenant colonel.* In any club, there is occasionally an undercurrent of tension between younger and older members; at this time in the United Service Club, that tension was between veterans of the 1914-18 war and the younger men of 1939-45. 'Joe' Lang, not only a brave and resourceful soldier but a man of eminent good sense, could see the view of both World War I and World War II veterans; he moved quickly to dispel any suggestion that the Second AIF members might be less valuable than their predecessors. As well, that minuted remark demonstrates the dilemma, which is something of a chicken-and-egg argument: Do we move to a bigger, more expensive premises to attract more members? Will they be attracted by the new premises and facilities on offer? Will we, by moving, perhaps even alienate some of our older members? The meeting pondered these points.

In the event, the objections were few. Only two speakers opposed the motion and, Lieutenant Colonel J H Byrne, a former commanding officer of the 42nd Battalion and father of two present-day club members - themselves both lieutenant colonels** - thought the meeting had gone on long enough. Lieutenant Colonel Byrne moved that the motion be put. No doubt that Byrne, a forthright man of strong personality, thought that it was a good idea and deserved to go through. The president agreed, and weighed in with letters from 31 country members, all of whom were in favour of the proposal. Of the 166 members present, 165 voted in favour of the proposal to buy 'Montpelier', for the sum of £30,000. The following motion was for the purchase of its furniture and fittings; that, too, passed without any real dissension and the members also agreed to the very sensible suggestion of raising the money

*The official historian, Gavin long, describes Lang as a 'notable infantry subaltern in the previous war'. Lang was wounded in the street fighting in Benghazi in 1941, shot in the shoulder while sheltering in a recessed doorway. Lang was a big man and the doorway was not sufficient to hide his large frame. An electrical and mechanical engineer, Lang worked before the war for Evans Deakin and was in charge of steel erection during the early stages of construction of the Story Bridge, which was completed in 1940. Lang commanded the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion in 1942-43 and the Buna Base Sub Area between 1943 and 1944.

**As Army reserve officers, J H Byrne RFD, QC commanded the Officer Cadet Training Unit and RJ Byrne the 49th Battalion, The Royal Queensland regiment.

through debentures. The meeting took little over an hour and then, no doubt, the members adjourned to the bar, rather pleased with their night's work. Now the committee had to translate that decision into action.

The Move to 'Montpelier'

The committee wasted no time in carrying through the general meeting's decision. On Friday, 4 October, 1946, it met. At this meeting were the president, Lieutenant-Colonel Little, the vice president, Lieutenant A Boyd, Engineer-Commander H S Platt, Lieutenant Colonel S L McIntyre, Major G A Regan, Major O D O'Brien, Captain W A Hawkins and Captain J Paterson, the honorary Club solicitor, present by invitation. Apologies were received from Lieutenant Colonel Amies, who had been instrumental in preparing the committee's case to members, and Lieutenant Commander Stevens. The minutes indicate the sense of Club feeling existed at this stage of its history. For example, Engineer-Commander Platt* moved that a notice be put on the board suggesting that members with interests in architecture and general builders' trades register their names with the secretary, 'thus following the policy of the Club to give preference to members'. That was a policy which had been in existence for some time; now, as so many members attempted to re-establish careers and businesses after the war, it was a policy of increased importance.

One of the first considerations was the need to finance the purchase of 'Montpelier'. Captain Paterson advised the committee that it would be necessary to apply to Sub Treasury to float the debenture issue; he offered to draft the necessary letter and debenture form. As a result of this meeting, a sub committee of three was formed to raise the necessary money. This was chaired by Lieutenant Colonel McIntyre, who was to become president in 1949, and included Lieutenant Colonel Amies, president in 1950 and 1951, and Captain R A Nowland, a National Mutual representative and well-known club member. At the same time, the committee voted to pay £1000 to Isles Love & Co as a deposit but there remained, among the other problems to be solved, the question of what do with the few permanent boarders who remained in 'Montpelier'.

During wartime, Brisbane had expanded beyond almost all recognition. At this time, war-time rationing of building materials still applied; housing was in short

*Platt, as his rank indicates, had been a naval engineering officer and was a skilled 'tinkerer' with all kinds of machinery and equipment. As well as being an enthusiastic committeeman, he was the Club's chief (and unofficial) handyman for many years.

supply and good quality lodgings, close to the city, were difficult to obtain. 'Montpelier' offered accommodation to 13 guests at the not-inconsiderable sum of £4/10/- a week. For this sum, the boarders received use of the facilities which had so attracted some club meetings, including the tennis courts where the car parks now stand. (This was when the average weekly earnings were less than £5 a week.) Commander Platt told the meeting he had approached Miss Sheahan about moving the existing guests into the Green House, as the timber building next door came to be known;* the Club might reduce their weekly rent to £4 because of the loss of amenities. This seemed suitable, although the Moreton Club also had made some inquiries about moving into the Green House. It was clear the Club could continue to do business along the lines suggested by Commander Platt until its ultimate occupation of all the premises; the secretary was to write to Miss Sheahan offering the accommodation in the Green House, with the exception of two suites and one room. Then, the committee moved to other serious business: the question of catering; the use of a temporary lounge until a bar was established and a proposal to give the secretary free quarters for himself and his family.

The committee was also perturbed about articles which had appeared in the city's three newspapers of the time - *The Courier-Mail*, the *Telegraph* and the *Truth*. Major O'Brien moved that the three newspapers be written to, asking that before anything was published about the Club, 'the type matter be referred to President as to fact'. Then, as now, newspapers had the ability to upset the committees and members of clubs by reports of inaccuracy and sensationalism. However, a diligent search of the newspapers' files has failed to produce any reference to the Club during this period; perhaps Major O'Brien had concerns about other aspects of the newspapers' reporting.**

Despite the fact that this was a committee comprised of busy men, it met frequently in the early days of the 'Montpelier' purchase. Less than a week later, it met again at lunchtime; it was clear that Miss Sheahan was trying to do a little better out of the deal. Lieutenant Colonel Little told the committee that Miss Sheahan now wanted £8500, made up of £7500 for the furniture and £1000 for 'disturbance'. Miss Sheahan, according to the president, was not quite certain whether she could obtain the necessary guests for the Green House and she had also received some advice, from an unspecified source, that 'she was not getting much out of the deal'. The point to

*The wooden building on the eastern side of the Club has always been known colloquially as the 'Green House' because of its colour. When the Club was repainted in the 1980s, this made one decision about colour choice extremely easy.

**Like so many Clubs, the United Service Club has always been reticent about airing its activities in the pages of the daily newspapers. This was certainly the case for this Club, except for a brief, out-of-character period in the 1970s when it paid for an advertisement in *The Sunday Mail* much to the horror of some members.

be decided, reported the eminently reasonable Little, was 'whether the terms are too stiff or whether we should stand out for a better figure'. There was the problem of Miss Sheahan's advice, presumably in running the establishment as a cash business during the transition to the club stage; the committee did not want to lose the benefit of that knowledge.

Lieutenant Colonel Amies said he did not think the Club should go above £8000. Miss Sheahan, he said, could find controlling 'Montpelier' on the present basis a losing proposition. It could be six months before the deal was finalised and the Club, according to Amies, should not rush in and close for a large figure. The committee resolved to fix the figure at £8000, recalling that the lease to Miss Sheahan still had nearly two years to run.

There was, however, a problem of delay in moving into the new premises. Although there was no great pressure to leave George Street, there was the question of prestige; Lieutenant Colonel Little said he thought the Club would suffer if it delayed moving into 'Montpelier', particularly as he thought membership would grow after the move. Little had a point; the attraction of any club includes its premises; 'Montpelier' clearly had its own attractions. Little pushed up the figure to be offered to Miss Sheahan by another £250. Captain Paterson offered to have the letter ready to sign if Miss Sheahan agreed to finalise for this figure.

Amid all the detail and negotiation for 'Montpelier', the normal activities went on. The committee met again on 21 October, 1946 with the purchase still influencing its thinking. That year's Christmas cards, for example, were to feature a half-tone block of 'Montpelier', and 1000 were ordered. Proposals to begin the painting were considered and refrigerators - one for bottles at £177 and one for the kitchen at £218 - were considered and passed. These prices, high by today's standards, were after a 20 percent discount.

But the war was still very much in recent memory and the minutes reflect strong residual bitterness towards the late enemies. A model - of what we don't know - had been made by a Japanese prisoner of war. Obviously it was thought to have had some attraction at that time, but now the committee was adamant: 'This model is not wanted in the Club and that same be donated to "Montrose" but not officially'.

The Club was clearly in good hands, with a busy active committee. It had 385 bottles of scotch whisky and 58 bottles of the Australian product. Its supplies of rum, gin and brandy were adequate. It had been offered reciprocity with the United Service Club of 29 Chowringhee Road, Calcutta, an offer which it accepted with alacrity. Alas the reciprocity with that Club no longer applies.

At this time, the Club had reciprocal arrangements with the Junior Army and Navy Club, London, the Imperial Service Club of Sydney, the Navy, Army and Air Force Club of Victoria, the Naval, Military and Air Force Clubs of Adelaide, Perth and Tasmania. As well, there were similar arrangements with the Otago Officers Club and the

Canterbury Officers in New Zealand, the Quetta Club in Baluchistan, (then India, now Pakistan) and the Peshawar Club of India. In Canada, two clubs offered reciprocity; the Canadian Officers Club and Institute in Toronto and the United Services Club in Montreal. Reciprocity with so many clubs of similar background and origins indicated that the United Service Club, Brisbane, was well regarded and accepted.

Most importantly for the Club's continued prosperity, on that night in October it voted in 118 town and 30 country members. Among the new members were Captain Richard Cameron,* who had won a Distinguished Service Order as a captain. Cameron later became a Club president and is a trustee; Flight Lieutenant Alec Clouston, later a prominent general practitioner in the eastern suburbs of Brisbane; Captain Derek Glasgow, son of the general and a former member of the 6th Division Cavalry; Major-General R H Nimmo, general officer commanding Northern Command and Captain W. 'Bill' L. Rudder, later a prominent Brisbane businessman and charity worker. Also admitted on that night were Wing Commander George Christensen, president between 1957 and 1959, Wing Commander Peter Delamothe, RAAF medical officer and Minister for Justice and Attorney-General between 1963 and 1971 and Queensland Agent-General in London between 1971 and 1973. Other prominent Queenslanders admitted at this time were Major Duncan Russell, Flying Officer Bill Brett, later general manager of Brett's timber and hardware group, and Captain Eddie Pearce, for many years secretary of the Queensland Sugar Producers' Association. The following month, another 65 town and six country members were elected. These included Major G A G Lucas, later a prominent Supreme Court judge and Major H D 'Blue' Steward.** Little's predictions about growth were well-made.

There were also some members for whom the return to civilian life was more than just a matter of form. At its meeting on November 20, the committee considered a letter from a former RAAF flight-lieutenant who wanted to be known as 'Mr' from now on. 'It was decided', the minutes record, 'if any member desired to be known as "Mr" and not by his Navy, Army or Air Force rank, his request would be acceded to.'

A glance at the accounts for the month give an idea of stock and trading in this busy, pre-Christmas period of the first full year since the end of the war in the Pacific. In October, 1946, the Club spent £1004/14/4 on purchases, mainly on foodstuffs and drinks; £29/5/1 on maintenance. Bar sales for the month totalled £1274/8/10. Bar profits for the year to September 30, 1946, totalled more than £5000, with a profit of more than 37 percent on sales.

The 54th annual general meeting was held on 25 November, 1946. Although two special general meetings were held earlier in 1946 (with the business of voting on

*Later Lieutenant Colonel Richard Cameron DSO, ED.

**Stewards's book *Recollections of a Regimental Medical Officer*, (Melbourne University Press, 1983) is a superb account of life in an infantry battalion, as seen through the eyes of its doctor.

acquisition of new premises), this meeting still attracted 166 members, evidence of the enthusiasm many were showing for their Club. The mood of the meeting was one of congratulations for the committee. Lieutenant N B Harper congratulated the treasurer on presenting what he described as 'the most favourable balance sheet in years'. The balance sheet reflected the strong trading position. Profit transferred to the accumulated account was £3319/1/7, while assets had grown from £15160/16/ 9 in 1945 to £18075/15/6. It had been a good year and the members were well pleased.

As well, there can be seen some emerging social trends. Part of this annual meeting was taken up with a discussion about the position of women and lady friends in the Club. The Green House was thought to be ideal for entertaining wives and lady friends, but one member, Lieutenant L E Crisp, went further. He wanted to see some provision for women who had served as commissioned officers in the war. In the 1990s, when women are still facing obstacles in membership of some clubs, some members had advanced attitudes to this issue. The question of women in the Club will be considered in a later chapter but even at this early stage, it was an idea exercising the minds of members. Yet it has to be said that not all members liked the idea of women in their Club. This meeting carried by only two votes the suggestion that a Ladies Night be held. For many members, particularly the older pre-World War II members, the Club was somewhere they could forgo the benefits of female company!*

In those months before Christmas 1946, planning for the move to Wickham Terrace gathered momentum. On 2 December, a further special committee meeting was held to settle more of the detail of the purchase and eventual move. This meeting also heard of the death of the former chief steward, George Sye, a long-serving and greatly valued retainer of the club.

The use of the Green House was concerning the committee, which was aiming to maximise return on this particular investment. Two days later, the Green House sub-committee - the committee had then a special talent for delegation - met to consider its use. The Green House was valued at about £5000, but with the wartime price control regulations still in force, a return of only 10 percent was the maximum allowed. The sale of this property was not thought to be prudent; the sub-committee members were told that the value of the property must appreciate. At the same time, the committee was worried that trading might not continue at the same levels into the future and that too much capital might be invested in real estate. Should this occur, the Green House could be sold - but at a better price.

*The attitude of the United Service Club in Brisbane can be contrasted with one of its southern sister Clubs. In one club, a wife rang and asked for her husband. 'I'm sorry madam,' she was told, 'there are no husbands in this club, only members.'

The sub-committee recommended that, apart from one room, the remainder of the building be let. An earlier decision that the chief steward be allowed to live-in was rescinded because of the expenditure necessary to make the space suitable for a family (and at a time when building materials were still rationed), as well as the simple economic fact that the rent the Club would need to charge would be beyond the financial ability of the chief steward to pay.

Clearly, with a site on Wickham Terrace, the Green House had potential for professional offices or surgeries. The sub-committee considered, quite rightly as it transpired, that 'no other class of tenant would return the same amount of revenue as professional or business tenants'. The potential rents, based on a minimum of 10/- per square foot, would be £22/6/- a week or £1200 a year.

The *minutiae* of committee decisions is also revealed in the minutes for this period. Apparently the committee was concerned about members' use of the Club telephones. The subject had been raised at the annual general meeting the previous month, when one member noticed that postal and telephone charges had jumped from £134 to more than £191. It was considered, Lieutenant Harper told the meeting, that all members should pay for their telephone calls. Part of the problem, it seems, arose from the stewards' lack of familiarity with the switch board; at the next committee meeting, it was resolved that 'the stewards receive instruction in the use of the switch board until they were efficient in the use of the same'. At the same time, the committee decided to impose a charge of threepence per call, and left it to the secretary to decide how the charge was to be made. There were no public or coin telephones in the Club at that time.

This seemingly high charge for a telephone call was quickly reduced. At the 16 December, 1946 meeting, the committee resolved to drop the charge by one penny, but only after some terse exchanges. The original decision to drop the charge was made by the president, acting apparently on his own authority. Supported by two of the committee members, this action was subsequently confirmed. Another member; however, objected to the president's apparent high-handedness. No, he said, the charge of threepence should stay and an amendment to that effect was put. The amendment was lost and the members remained paying twopence a call for the time being. With such momentous decisions are club committees so often faced.

The sub-committee had, however, other, weightier matters to consider; surplus furniture and fittings would now be available and, in the days of early post-war shortages, eagerly sought by members anxious to furnish homes or fit out offices. As the minutes record, 'Useless articles had already been sent to auction'. Alas, we are left none the wiser what the committee regarded as a 'useless article', but the Club had some surplus eiderdowns and blankets to dispose of, while deciding to retain all the linen. Again the wartime shortages of such goods had carried through into the early years of peace.

Although shortages might have existed in some areas, there was certainly no shortage of patronage. Some, more cautious committee members might have expected that sales would begin to slow down from the heady, immediate post-war days. This was not the case. For example, in November 1945, the Club recorded just over £1000 in sales. By comparison, sales in November 1946 were a very healthy £1572, with a profit of about 32 percent or more than £500. These increases are real, with virtually no items increasing in price in the period.

Part of the reason for the growth in sales was the number of new members continuing to join. In December 1946, 79 town and 18 country members were elected, including Squadron Leader E G Broad, who was also a member of the 1947- 48 Wallabies Rugby Union team to the United Kingdom. Eddie Broad was later to become a prominent District Court judge and chairman of the Brisbane Amateur Turf Club. Another member elected on this day was Lieutenant S P McCready, who had served with the 2/9th Battalion and was later to become Queensland manager of the Bank of New South Wales. A platoon sergeant at the beginning of the Battle of Buna in 1942, Steve McCready commanded what was left of his company at the end of that action. The last name mentioned at the roll of new members elected that night is that of Major C M Wrench, with his unit given as headquarters, Queensland Lines of Communication Area. 'Clarrie' Wrench won a well-deserved Military Cross in World War I and was, until his death in 1986, a stalwart of the 9th Battalions Association. Shortly before his death Wrench completed an excellent history of this battalion in World War I.*

Despite the growth of membership, gratifying to a committee anxious to see the expansion, there remained the vexed question of what to do with the Green House. Over Christmas, the president received approaches to use the premises from the Master Mariners Association and the Moreton Club. As well, the real estate company, Ray White, offered to lease the premises. After some discussion Lieutenant Colonel Amies moved that the Green House be let to the Moreton Club for a rental of £1050 a year. This was seconded and thus began the Moreton Club's geographic association with the Club. This committee meeting also examined the question of a third billiard room and the plans were amended to incorporate this most essential feature of a gentlemen's club. At this meeting, another 109 town members and 19 country members were added to the rolls. The secretary was kept busy during this period with new members; in February another 131 former and serving officers were added to this list with a similar number joining the following month and another 99 in April.

*Eddie Broad's rugby career can be found in Jack Pollard's *Australian Rugby Union -The Game and The Players* (Angus & Robertson, 1984) p94. Steve McCready is mentioned *passim* in the official histories and in Peter Charlton's *The War Against Japan* (Time Life 1988). Clarrie Wrench's *Campaigning with the Fighting Ninth* was published by Boolarong Press, accompany run by another club member, Captain L T Padman OBE.

None of the Club's correspondence for this period of its history has survived; a great pity, because the committee had received a letter from the Secretary of the Department of the Army about an impending visit from Field Marshal Lord Montgomery, who was due to tour Australia and meet many former members of the Ninth Division which had served in his Eighth Army in the Western Desert in 1942. Naturally the committee was anxious that 'Monty' should visit the new Club. He did so - on July 15, 1947 - and was greeted by many hundreds of members. The visit is not mentioned in the Field Marshal's memoirs, but he does talk about meeting members of the Returned Services League as a 'great joy' as so many were his former comrades-in-arms. On 7 July, the week before Monty's visit, the committee resolved to make both the Field Marshal and Lord Louis Mountbatten life members.

But most attention of this period was directed towards getting the Wickham Street premises ready for opening. A committee meeting on 25 February, 1947 heard from the architect, Mr Dods, the builder, Mr Stronach, the electrician, Mr Farrimond, and the terrazzo mason, Mr Petrie. 'Each of these gentlemen explained the present position with regards to their own departments. The total cost of the alterations, and additions ... will be approximately £8000 and the work is expected to be completed in time to open the top floor for Easter'.

Already the committee was looking ahead at decorations for the new premises. In March 1947, the secretary wrote to the director of the Australian War Memorial seeking the purchase (or better, the loan) of pictures which might be suitable for hanging in the Club. The director replied in April 1947, suggesting some pictures could be bought; the matter was deferred for some three months and to be dealt with then by the House sub-committee.

Although the move from George Street had gone easily, not all the facilities at the new premises were immediately available. 26 May, 1947, was set for the opening of the new bar at the Club. Traills Ice Works had supplied a refrigerator and cooling unit, at the cost of £175. This was necessary to bring the beer down to a temperature which members could find acceptable in Brisbane's steamy climate.* But the committee was also showing a remarkable degree of confidence about one future source of income. In May 1947, even before the new bar was opened, it resolved to acquire poker machines - set on the basis of 85 percent for the player and 15 percent for the Club. These machines were to be placed in the 'store ready for use'.** At the same time, prudent financial advisers such as Lieutenant Colonel Amies suggested that it was time to curb the spending. It was now time, he told the committee meeting,

*The correct temperature of the beer was a matter of continuing concern for the committee. Early post-war beer reticulating systems were not always efficient or capable of handling the volumes consumed by Club members and their guests.

**It was proved a long wait. At the time of writing, more than 43 years later, Queensland has only just got its first poker machines.

to take heed of the Club's position and defer further capital spending for another four months. The question of increased subscriptions began to be raised at committee meetings; clearly an injection of funds by this means would help the club considerably, but it was decided to postpone the pain - as it were - until after the new bar had opened. The psychology was neatly timed; the members would be given the 'facts and figures' at the opening of the new bar. One week before the new bar was opened, a committee meeting admitted another 72 members. Indeed, membership grew rapidly during this year. In his report for 1947, Lieutenant Colonel Little noted that membership had grown from 1200 to 2168.

Once in the new premises, the committee moved quickly to improve the range of social activities offered to members and their ladies. However, these were still austere years after World War II. In his presidential report, Little referred to shortages and the difficulty in obtaining many lines. Friday was a 'meatless and butterless' day, because of the difficulty in obtaining these goods; bottled beer was still in such short supply that it could not be sold to members for consumption away from the premises.

But now it was moving into winter, and in Brisbane, this means social activities and the Ball Season culminating in the Exhibition Week round of parties. That year, the committee planned to have the Ball at Cloudland. It was an important and formal occasion, even by the standards of those days. Debutantes could be presented to the Governor, so long as 'any debutante nominated has not previously attended an official ball'. The price of the tickets was fixed at 15/5 plus 7/1 tax, the 'tax' in question being an entertainment tax imposed by the Commonwealth Government as a war-time measure and not yet rescinded.

Post-war rationing and the general austerity of those years still provided problems. For example, planning for the 1947 Ball, a gala social occasion, was hampered by the inability of the breweries to supply additional quantities of beer. The minutes of the time note, rather forlornly, that Bulimba Brewery was unable to increase its supplies whereas Castlemaine could supply only an additional 60 gallons a week. With membership lists growing rapidly this increase - welcome as it was - still was insufficient to meet the demand.

For the ball, the committee resolved that members would have to make their own arrangements for liquor. The number attending was limited to 2100, including official guests. The club was to be open between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. on the evening of 11 August. The minutes reveal the meticulous planning which went into preparing for such an occasion. On 28 July, 1947, some two weeks before the big night, the special committee held a meeting; the planning is worth including in some detail.

For example, there were two rehearsals, the first on Sunday, 10 August, at 10 a.m. In the interests of uniformity, the Club supplied the bouquets for the debutantes, but no such floral offerings were provided for the ladies in the official party. There was

a gallery for the relatives of the debutantes. Evening dress was not compulsory for those in the gallery but they were to leave immediately after the presentation. Other matters discussed included employment of additional police, general duty men – ‘at the Club's expense’ - and the printing of the supper tickets in five different colours, presumably for ease of serving such a huge crowd.

Yet despite the difficulties in obtaining suitable liquid refreshments, the evening was a huge success. Cloudland was packed; all 2100 tickets were sold and alcoves were set up on the balcony to accommodate the overflow of guests inside the hall itself. Brisbane, which had felt the effects of the war rather more than other Australian capitals, returned only slowly to normal peace-time life. Social occasions, such as balls, were important in helping to regain that normality. The next morning, *The Courier-Mail* reported: ‘From the Gallery of Cloudland Ballroom the United Service Club resembled a brilliant mosaic, with distinctive service uniforms as a background for the swirling multi-coloured frocks of the feminine dancers’.

It seems that the ball that year might well have been too successful. At the committee meeting on 18 August, with the event still fresh in mind, the committee noted a number of ‘lessons learned’. These included limiting the number attending to 1500 or 1600 in future, should the ball be held at Cloudland again. And there was the difficult question of to whom the debutantes should be presented. In the planning for the ball, the committee had always intended that the Governor should receive the debutantes.* That year, however, the debutantes were presented to the Governor General, Mr William McKell, a former Australian Labor Party Premier of New South Wales, who was not a popular choice with many members. It was an embarrassment which should not have occurred and the committee was determined would not be allowed to occur again.

This was not the only problem facing the committee at the time. Members had been complaining that their hats were going missing from the cloakroom. (This was a time, of course, when no gentleman would consider himself dressed without a hat.) The secretary investigated, and found a bell boy was the culprit. The hat-napper was exposed and dismissed; members’ head-wear was safe once more.

As Brisbane gradually returned to normal, the Club’s social calendar also filled up. A social evening - Saturday night at home - was held on 20 September 1947, with no dancing although a band was hired for incidental music. The guest numbers were limited to 150 members. The catering was light fare, supplied by the Trefoil Cafe nearby. Clearly the growing membership was finding the Club attractive, not just as a place to meet for a quiet drink after work and to renew old friendships, but also as a place of entertainment. The membership grew strongly during this period. At the

*As the earlier chapters make clear, the United Service Club Ball was a major event on the Brisbane social calendar, often with both the Governor-General and the Governor attending.

1947 annual meeting, Little was able to report that the Club now had a total of 2168 members, of whom 13 had had life membership bestowed upon them. Overwhelmingly most of the members came from the city - 485 - but 670 others enjoyed country membership, evidence of the strong support offered to the Club by men on the land and in the important regional cities and towns of this decentralised State. More than 1200 new members had joined since the move to its premises on Wickham Terrace. 'It is very gratifying to note,' Little wrote in the annual report, 'that accommodation can be found in the Club for so many new members whom it would have been impossible to accommodate in our old premises. New members are still being nominated, and country members especially catered for, now that there is a residential section available.' Little was justifiably proud of the new Club; the pride was evident in his remarks. But equally, the president was determined to ensure that the other members who had helped make the move to 'Montpelier' a reality should be recognised. 'It is appreciated,' he added 'that difficulties would have been experienced if the Club had not received the professional services rendered by a number of members, and thanks are expressed to all those associated with the alterations and additions to the new premises, which have resulted in our new home becoming one of the finest clubs in Queensland and, when all our ambitions are realised, will be one of the finest clubs in Australia.'

The huge influx of new members, the overwhelming majority of whom had served in World War II as junior officers, gave the Club a youthful exuberance with which the committee had occasionally to contend. The minutes about this time note that one member had caused a 'disturbance' at dinner and was, as a result, invited to give his side of the story to the committee at its next meeting. He did so; the committee seemed satisfied at the explanation. Occasionally it seems that old wartime enmities towards other officers for real or imagined slights were never far below the surface. A few beers, a relaxation of the strict discipline of a wartime mess and words could be said. Yet the youth of the new members was obvious in other more innocent ways. The tennis courts were in heavy use, particularly the one lighted for night play. An internal cricket club was formed in 1947 and it, too, enjoyed some success. Later, especially during the early 1950s, some cricket matches of a high standard - virtually club level, if not first-class - were played by Club members. Some members were agitating for a squash club to be formed and for a squash court to be built. Perhaps wisely the committee had deferred serious consideration until after a 'permit to build' was acquired. In the immediate post-war years, building controls still existed and squash courts for private clubs did not have a particularly high priority.

For those members who preferred more sedentary challenges, the Club acquired several sets of chessmen, and arranged an invitation match from a chess master of the time a Mr Kable, who took on 14 opponents simultaneously. Perhaps not surprisingly after the end of this effort, few of the members were interested in playing chess,

although the sets remained available. The Club library was growing strongly at the time. In 1947, the committee spent £60 on 132 new books and appealed for donations of additional books from members. Financially the Club was in reasonable shape after two years' post-war trading although members had been tardy in taking up the debenture issue; in that year's annual report, Little noted that only 212 members, out of the 2168, had subscribed, representing debentures worth £8320. The club needed to raise £10,000 in this fashion and the committee thought it would have no difficulty in doing so, so long as most members subscribed at least £10 each. Clearly that optimism proved to be slightly misplaced, with so few members subscribing to the issue, although the amounts raised by those few members were indeed substantial. No doubt for many young members, struggling to re-establish themselves after the war, £10 was no mean sum.

Gradual Changes and New Members

A special general meeting held on 13 October, 1947, sought a number of changes in rules, including one that would see the president elected by the members. Previously, after declaration of the poll for the committee at the annual meeting, the members present at that meeting elected a president and a vice president from the newly-elected committee members. The notice of special general meeting sought to give eligibility as members of the Club to officers of the Mercantile Marine; to give members responsibility to elect directly presidents and to give committee members two year terms instead of being elected annually, as had been the case.

The latter two proposals were adopted and apply still; the first proposal was rejected. Almost certainly the most contentious issue was the proposal for Mercantile Marine officers to be elected as members of the Club; strong opinions existed both for and against. This meeting attracted 81 members and lasted two hours, during which time all the proposals were strenuously debated.

New members continued to be attracted to the Club, although by the end of 1947, the numbers being approved by the committee each meeting night were beginning to decline. At the meeting of October, 1947, for example, 46 new members were admitted, including a RAAF Squadron Leader, F W Boyle, who had a Distinguished Flying Cross and Bar and the French *Croix de Guerre*. As well, Captain J W Mott, who possessed both the Military Medal and Distinguished Conduct Medal, joined the list of new members.

The next month, another 48 members were elected. Included in the list at this time was Major Roy Thorburn, who had served with the 9th Battalion, Australian Military Forces, in all its campaigns. At the time of writing Roy Thorburn is still a very active member of the 9th Battalions Association, as well being a Club stalwart. That night too saw the admission of Captain A S Hind, who had landed with the original 15th Battalion at Anzac Cove on 25 April, 1915. He was seriously wounded during the subsequent fighting and evacuated to Egypt, where doctors wanted to amputate his hand. Stan Hind prevailed on them not to do so, and recovered sufficiently well to play rugby league and, later, golf off a handicap in the single figures. During World War II he was commissioned in the AMF and served as a railway transport and troop conducting officer for units moving to north Queensland.

Still the tedious detail of running the Club continued. On 24 November, the committee convened a special meeting, largely to deal with a member who had

caused a disturbance in the dining room on Saturday, 15 November. Alas the details of the disturbance do not survive, but clearly it was serious - serious enough to warrant the member's suspension until the end of the current financial year, which was then September 30, 1948. Two other members were 'invited' to appear before the committee to give their accounts of the disturbance. The minutes for this period reflect the fact that the Club's membership at this time was comprised of a sizeable slice of young men who had endured years of hardship and dangers, and whose methods of settling disputes today would be considered excessively robust. It is to the very great credit of the committee at the time that, as such disputes occasionally arose, they were dealt with quickly and with common sense and equity on all sides. The war was still a harsh and recent memory; allowances had to be made.

Four days after this special general meeting, the Club held its annual general meeting, the first in the new premises. Little stepped down as president - his work was done. Little had been the driving force behind, not just the acquisition of the new building and the expansion of facilities, but also behind the push for new members. He realised the demand for this kind of club among the many young men who had spent the war years with comrades and, even now into peace, missed the camaraderie of the officers' mess or the wardroom. His restless energy, his clear determination and his ability to gather around him like-minded friends and colleagues who could translate plans into action made him an invaluable president during this period of expansion.

The Club was fortunate, too, that Little's wartime medical duties kept him confined to Australia; he was in the right place to appreciate the potential for growth and the need for larger and better premises. The time was right for the Club to move; Little ensured that it moved to the best premises that could be found. The shape and substance of the United Service Club today owes much to the presidency of 'Lal' Little.

In recognition of Little's efforts, that annual meeting conferred on him life membership. Lieutenant Colonel C G Gehrman,* who proposed Little for life membership - a 'well-merited honour, as the club's present position was due to him' - was also given this honour, in recognition of his efforts over the years. As well, life membership was granted to two prominent British commanders of World War II, Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein and Earl Mountbatten of Burma.** Both followed visits to the Club. From the floor now, as a life member

*Lieutenant Colonel Gehrman joined the Club in 1906 and had been honorary auditor since 1935.

**In the case of Monty, the honour was understandable. The Field Marshall had often expressed admiration for what he called his 'splendid' Australians. Years later, when he returned to the Alamein battlefield, he said bluntly: 'I could not have won at Alamein without the Australian 9th Division.' But Mountbatten had had little contact with Australian servicemen in any numbers. No Australian army units fought in Burma, when Mountbatten was at South East Asian Command; nor were there Australian ships under his command in the Mediterranean where he managed to have his destroyer sunk from beneath him. Even so, life membership of the Club-a membership tragically and brutally truncated by his murder in 1979 - was a fitting tribute to the degree of respect with which this charismatic and popular officer was held.

and immediate past president, Little proposed that the new committee call a special general meeting to discuss a fee increase.

Clearly this was something of a contentious issue. The members had before them Club accounts which indicated that the Club was in a sound financial position, although the response to the debenture issue had been rather uneven. Little had some opposition, not unexpectedly. Commander Eric Feldt, who had served for a time as Club secretary, thought the committee should wait a little longer before raising subscriptions. Little, however, was prepared for these objections. He told that meeting that 'fifty times' during the past half year he had been asked when fees were going to be increased. The members were not unobservant; they noticed the bigger Club, with its better premises and facilities. A fee increase, even in those pre-inflationary days, seemed inevitable.

Little's persuasive powers had not deserted him when he stepped down from the president's chair; only 10 members voted against the motion to refer the question of a fee increase to a special general meeting. It was carried easily.

At this distance, given the powers that committees have today, it seems almost quaint that such a question should be raised at an annual general meeting then referred to a special general meeting for consideration. It might be argued that members then were prepared to take more of an interest in the running of their Club, especially on the question of fees, whereas today they are quite prepared to leave that question to their committee.

Straight after this meeting, a special general meeting was held to consider the question of a levy on members - 5/- for town members; 2/6 for country members to cover gratuities. This was an attempt to ensure staff members received a better reward for their dedication. Lieutenant Colonel Amies told the meeting that it was difficult to keep staff because of the 'no tipping' rule and the small amounts put by members in the staff gratuity boxes. This move failed, probably because the infrequent users of the Club's services felt that frequent users should pay more. A flat rate was not acceptable. The Club only managed to get this issue right when an additional item, 'Staff Gratuity' was added to the annual subscription notice. This system, adopted some years ago, produces a generous return.

It seems clear from the minutes that this proposal produced some fairly heated discussion. Finally the president ruled that no purpose would be served by discussing the issue further. It seems curious today that so much time and effort was spent in the discussion of five bob once a year and half a crown for the rich members in the bush!

This meeting also produced some more discussion about the presentation of debutantes at the Ball. Apparently the presence of the Labor Government appointed Governor-General, Mr McKell, worried some members who wanted the debutantes presented to a 'senior veteran of the empire's wars'. The motion, again an untidy mass of amendments, lapsed.

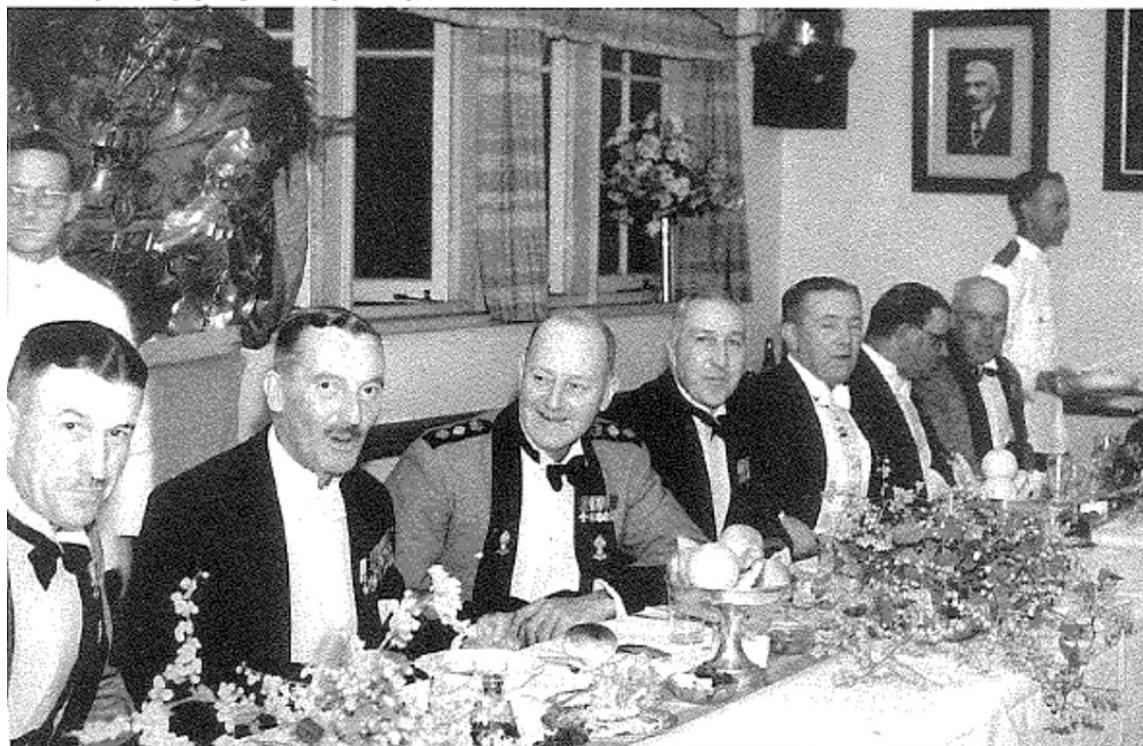


Squadron Leader Herbert John Louis Hinkler AFC DSM (1892-1933). Life member 1928. (By courtesy of the John Oxley Library)



Air Commodore Sir Charles Edward Kingsford Smith MC AFC (1897-1935). Life member 1933. (By courtesy of the John Oxley Library)

Annual formal dinner 1937. 2nd & 3rd from left, HE Colonel Sir Leslie Wilson and Colonel D E Evans. (By courtesy of the John Oxley Library)

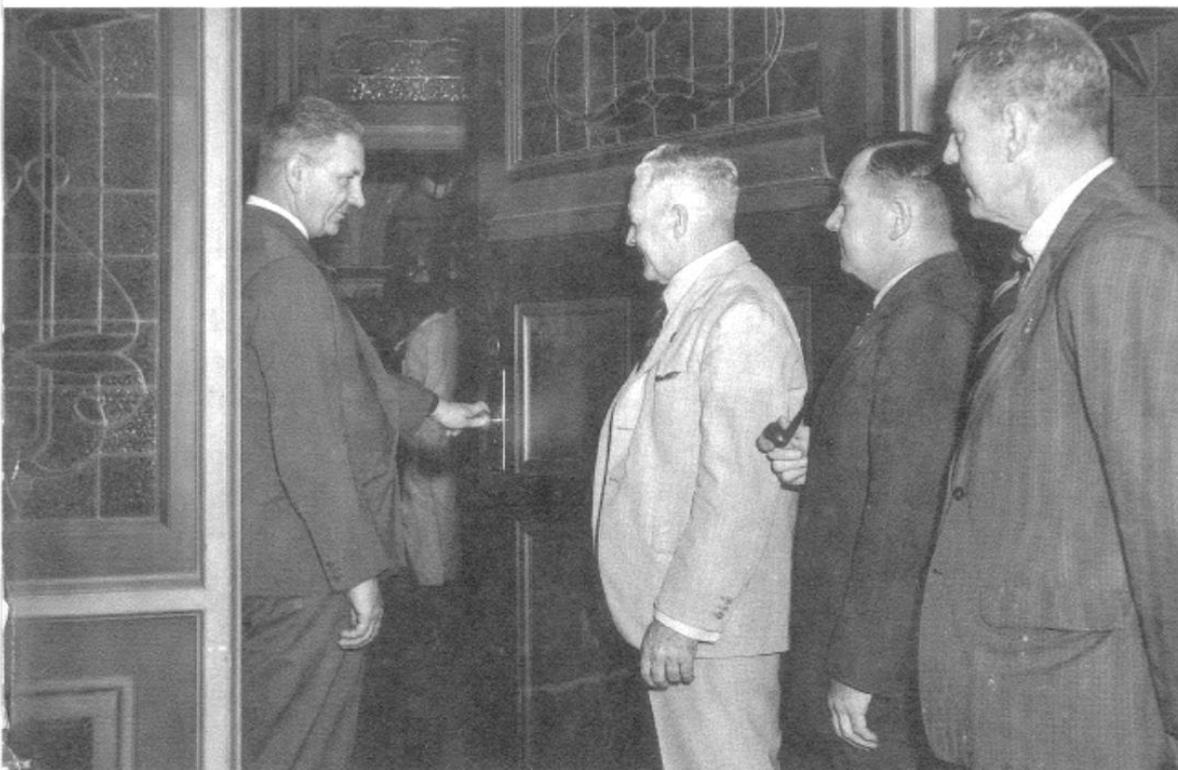




Farewell to 70 George Street. (By courtesy of the John Oxley Library)



Entering 183 Wickham Terrace. (By courtesy of the John Oxley Library)



The concern expressed by Lieutenant Colonel Amies about the difficulty in attracting and holding suitable staff was reinforced at the next committee meeting. The secretary pointed out that 40 staff members had joined and resigned from the Club's employment since 1 July, 1947. Post-war labour shortages, particularly for skilled bar and domestic workers, meant that clubs and hotels had to pay over-award payments to hold their people.

Staff problems were only one of the difficulties facing the new committee. After the huge expansion of membership, there was now a period of consolidation and the minutes for this period of the Club's history lack evidence of the major decision making efforts of the Little years. One matter, however, with which the committee had to deal immediately was the problem of illegal Sunday trading.

It had come to the committee's attention that the members staying in the Club, who were a more than useful source of revenue, were being illegally served with liquor on the Sabbath, in contravention of the State's licensing laws which were then a strict and slightly absurd mass of contradictions and restrictions. The police enforced those laws with enthusiasm; the last thing that the Club - or its new committee - needed was to be dragged through the magistrates' courts on charges of after-hours drinking. To do so would place the Club on the same level as a common sly-grogger. However, there was the question of the resident members' thirsts. These were respectable people, and an asset to the Club. Could they be served legitimately with liquor on Sunday? The matter was, very wisely, referred to the Club's solicitors for an opinion. That opinion does not survive but for all practical purposes, the problem was solved early in the New Year. The house sub-committee reported, rather gloomily, that there was no beer available to serve members on Sunday, licensing laws or no.

Indeed, January 1948 was a thirsty month. The beer quota was cut by 6 percent or 60 gallons per month. A little arithmetic suggests that the monthly quota was some 1000 gallons a month. (By contrast, today, because of drink-driving laws and changed liquor preferences, monthly draught beer consumption is a mere 20 gallons.) As well, no bottled beer was available. The committee responded to these difficulties by asking members to curtail their numbers of guests. Rationing applied to more than beer; coupons were necessary for the Club to buy new bath and hand towels.

Rationing, first imposed during the war years, continued until well in the 1950s. The Government's attempts to restrict drinking by rationing beer during the war years were, according to the official historian Paul Hasluck, 'resisted and evaded'. He added:

They (the attempts) saved some manpower and materials in the breweries but may have lost manpower not only to black marketing but by reason of the fact that drinkers either waited for the beer to come 'on' or, when it was on hastened to the pub so as not to miss

their share. They made it difficult and in some cases impossible for some sections of the community to obtain liquor Wartime experience makes it clear that beer and betting mean more than anything else in life to a considerable number of Australians.*

The period following the move to Wickham Terrace in 1947 was one of great conviviality for many of the World War II veterans who comprised most of the membership. They were young, making their way in the professions or business and able, at the same time, to maintain, in the Club, some of the war-time camaraderie. This was exemplified in the group which gathered at the south-west corner of the bar every Friday evening, at about 5 p.m. for drinks lasting an hour or two. Or, sometimes much longer, for those who had tolerant wives, or were prepared to take the criticism associated with a late and slightly unsteady homecoming. This group, sometimes known as 'The Unquenchables' was an institution for about 20 years until age, changed priorities and the advent of the breathalyser caused the numbers to dwindle, eventually to nothing. Attendance varied and, as some dropped out, others took their places, but most Fridays, 15-20 members would assemble at the appointed time. Early names included Flight Lieutenant M O 'Mo' Guthrie, Flight Lieutenant Jack Lock, Flight Lieutenant Frank Bottomer, Flight Lieutenant Jim Holliday, Lieutenant Herbert Mitchell, Major Don Petrie, Squadron Leader Bob Yeowart, Captain Ken Campbell, Flight Lieutenant Bernie McLoughlin (later His Honour Judge McLoughlin) Captain Jim Yates and Captain Bill Anderson, with others whose names have been forgotten. This group began and, indeed, thrived, despite the early rationing.

Although rationing was less severe in the immediate post-war years, there were still huge shortages of items which are now taken for granted. Indeed, the immediate post war years were characterised by industrial strife, as workers - freed from the constraints of wartime - now agitated for their share of the few luxuries that were around. In this period, railway workers, transport workers and miners all embarked on long and costly strikes; the committee was concerned about the possibility of admitting people 'with communistic tendencies' to the club as members or as guests, but particularly as members. The committee decided that the present methods of scrutiny were sufficient and no additional diligence was required.**

In January 1948, the new committee, under the presidency of Major G C Reid, began the new year's work of consolidating on the efforts of Little and his committee.

*Hasluck, Paul, *The Government and the People 1942-45* Canberra, Australian War Memorial. (1970) p274.

**During this period, some anti-communist organisations were formed, often based on a para-military framework. Little has been written about these organisations of this period, which tended to reflect the concern of former servicemen at the growing communist influence in the Australian Labor Party and in the trade unions. Ultimately the ALP was to split, partly over this question, but it is fascinating to see this kind of social concern emerging in the club minutes.

George Crowe Reid was the popular manager of Howard Motors in Adelaide Street. He had won a Military Cross in World War I and later served on the staff of the 9th Division headquarters in the Middle East during World War II. Reid joined the Club in 1936 and was president in 1947-48. Soon after World War II, he inaugurated the annual el Alamein dinner, for officers of the three services who fought in that battle. This dinner is held in the Club on 23 October. Since Reid's death in 1972, the dinners have been presided over by Lieutenant Colonel AS 'Gus' Gehrman.*

Little remained to assist, as immediate past president and vice-president, but it seems clear enough that Little wanted to step back and allow his successor a free hand. This meeting resolved that a Life Members' Honour Board be erected; the board now can be seen on the wall immediately opposite the entrance to the Royal Room.

Beer shortages continued to worry the committee which decided at this meeting to place notices in the Club, asking members not to bring 'visitors into the bar, until further notice, owing to the present beer shortages'. As well, this meeting also saw Lieutenant Colonel McIntyre formally move that the Club adhere strictly to the Liquor Act (then, as now, a cumbersome piece of legislation but rather more prohibitive in its scope). The committee was worried about Sunday trading, which had the potential to attract some unwelcome publicity. The house committee thought it had provided part of the answer to the Sunday trading difficulty; it had recommended that no beer be sold on Sunday because of the shortages! This meeting, too, provided more evidence of the success of the ball held during Exhibition Week the previous year. The committee decided to book Cloudland again for that year, on August 9, 1948.

Reports of the house committee from this time give a useful account of the difficulties in running a club - indeed, any business operation in what would now be called the hospitality industry - during these austere post-war years. Electricity, for example, had failed during several peak periods, with obvious problems for lighting and refrigeration. This too, in a Brisbane summer in the days before air conditioning! The committee decided that it needed, and as a matter of some urgency, electrical equipment which would prevent damage to refrigeration in such periods of unpredictable power supplies.

Austerity prevailed in other areas. To replace bath towels and table cloths, the Club needed to acquire ration coupons; 377 were obtained by the secretary, no doubt at some difficulty. The committee was also having problems with some of the more high-spirited members. The secretary told the house committee that a green snooker ball had gone missing, and that two white balls had been found in the garden of the

*Lieutenant Colonel 'Gus' Gehrman, CBE, DSO, ED, a son of the Club's former auditor and life member, Lieutenant Colonel C G Gehrman VD

nearby Union Jack Club. Quite clearly, some members were taking their snooker manners none too seriously, or perhaps were playing overly-exuberant games on the table, perhaps even 'slosh', much loved by young subalterns and frowned upon by mess and club committees.*

After the momentous decisions of the previous year, the committees of this time became involved with the banal and the mundane. The possible acquisition of a glass-washing machine was considered at length, and over several meetings. Eventually the committee decided that such a machine might be a good idea, but the members wanted a medical opinion. They resolved to approach Dr Fryberg, a member.**

Once his opinion was received, the Licensing Commission was to be approached. At this time, the Licensing Commission played an extraordinary part in what would today be the day-to-day running. It insisted, for example, that doors from food preparation areas be fly-screened, a necessary precaution certainly, but not one that would seem to require the active intervention of a government agency.

The banal and the mundane aside, this was an active committee, with a fine appreciation of the need for tact and circumspection in dealing with the members. At the meeting on 22 March, 1948, the problem of membership fee arrears was raised. Lieutenant Colonel Amies, ever the careful accountant, moved that 'a strong letter be sent to all recently elected members whose subscriptions...were outstanding, and a nice letter be sent to the older members whose subscriptions were in arrears'. It was the deference that youth owes to age, but the list of outstanding subscriptions was long and the committee's responsibility was clear.

Still, the problem of illegal Sunday drinking continued, with thirsty and inventive members finding a way to circumvent both the licensing laws and the committee's rulings. At the committee meeting in May, 1948, it was decided to take no action against 'certain members who posed as residents on Sunday, 18 April, 1948, and obtained liquor'. Indeed, the conduct of members continued to pose problems for the committee. In May, two members - one later a well known lawyer - were censured by the president and excluded from the Club for a month; another three members, all lieutenants, were required to give an explanation of their conduct in 'purchasing a bottle of rum and drinking same on premises after 10 p.m'. As well, the minutes give us a tantalising glimpse, but alas not more, of what the secretary rather cryptically called the 'Sydney incident' involving a member of the Imperial Service Club in that city. The boisterous behaviour of the war years had clearly not entirely disappeared. The incident involving the two members, including the legal gentlemen, had a sequel.

*And occasionally some senior officers. One of the authors has a memory, not altogether perfect, of playing slosh with a much-loved brigadier after a particularly long Infantry Corps dinner.

**Colonel Abraham Fryberg was director general of health and medical services in Queensland between 1947 and 1967. Later Sir Abraham Fryberg MBE, he joined the Club in 1947 after serving with the 9th Australian Division.

Apparently not satisfied at his treatment, the lawyer instructed a firm of solicitors to write to the committee on his behalf. This letter does not survive, but apparently it contained the threat of some legal or other action to bring about the member's reinstatement. Although their suspension was rescinded, a special committee meeting on 24 May decided that the two members be asked to show cause why they should not be dealt with under Rule 76, which could have seen their possible expulsion. However, within a month, the matter was settled satisfactorily; the two members were informed that, although the committee took a very grave view of the incident, 'in view of all the circumstances, and the apology tendered, (it decided that) no further action will be taken'.

Another member whose conduct had come under the scrutiny of the committee was not so fortunate. He had been involved in a disturbance in the Club late on the afternoon of Saturday, 22 May, 1948. On the instruction of the committee, the Club's solicitor wrote to him. His resignation was tendered at the special committee meeting on 2 June and accepted. Now, as the age of the members is in more mature figures, and the behaviour of younger members rarely troubles the committee, it is curious to reflect that the United Service Club had occasional problems of this nature. The problems were, almost certainly, those of men who had endured hard wars adjusting to the difficulties of peacetime.

The sudden flood of new post-war members was now down to a trickle, but a substantial trickle at that. In April 1948, 38 new members were elected, including Flight Lieutenant W A R Rae, later Sir Wallace, a Minister in the Bjelke-Petersen Government and Queensland's Agent General in London. But now, too, the committee was also moving to strike off a number of members who had joined in the early post-war period, and who found that the Club life was neither to their taste nor their financial capabilities.

In June, 1948, the Club lost its secretary, Captain L G Hitchcock, who resigned. Clearly the committee was unhappy that he should take this step; speaker after speaker thanked the former secretary for his help during the transfer period and offered him best wishes for the future. Once again, the invaluable Commander Eric Feldt stepped into the gap. It was a large gap to fill, with the wartime rationing still a problem, and the Club going through a teething period. But no detail was too unimportant for the house committee, which decided in June that the committee should purchase a 'club cigar'. The happy hours during which the committee members selected a suitable product for their consideration can only be imagined!

This was still a young man's club, at least in terms of the sudden influx of new members which had the effect of changing, virtually completely, its character. Sporting occasions were important and on 28 June, 1948 a meeting of cricket enthusiasts was held with the aim of conducting various fixtures during the coming summer season. It was decided to form a separate club within the Club, with its own

secretary, treasurer and office bearers, in an effort to lighten the work load of the already burdened secretary. Early opponents were to be the Tattersalls Club, then as now a predominantly sporting club with a fine tradition of cricket as well as other, more equine pursuits, and the United Licensed Victuallers Association. In subsequent years the cricket sub-club was to prove an important factor in the Club's activities. Other sports enjoyed by members at the time, golf and billiards (if the latter can be properly classed as a sport) persist to this day; alas cricket has disappeared from the Club's sporting calendar.

The latter months of 1948 saw the committee busy with the problems of staff reorganisation, with the ball (again with the lessons of the previous year's huge success still fresh in mind) and with consolidation of the rapid growth. In November, after another hugely successful ball during the Show week, the committee was still digesting the lessons it had learned. More than 1400 members and their guests attended the ball and, as the annual report notes, 'the function in every way maintained the high standard achieved by the club in previous years'. The members made it clear to the committee, however, that they wanted the ball kept as a social occasion and not as a revenue raiser. The committee had to be careful to do so. At the same time, however, the Club was attempting to acquire the prefix "Royal" for itself and the secretary was writing to the Royal Canadian Military Institute to ask how it had managed to come by the coveted title. This was consistent with the Club's continuing, strong loyalty to the Monarchy resulting, no doubt, from its military tradition. Now, too, the committee was busily preparing for the expected visit of King George VI the following April.

Amid all this excitement, however, the wisdom of Little's vision and effort in acquiring the new premises was apparent. A valuation carried out for insurance purposes estimated the premises, exclusive of electrical installations, lifts, refrigerator and cold room to be worth £53,432, with nearly another £10,000 in furniture.

That year's annual meeting, held on 26 November, saw only 42 members attend. Low attendance at such meetings is disappointing, but is also an indication that the overwhelming bulk of members believes the Club is being run efficiently and well. The minutes reveal no major decisions or motions and proceedings were over in a very respectable hour and 15 minutes. The shortness of this meeting is an indication of how business-like the committee was becoming. Not that previous committees had ever acted in an unwise or imprudent fashion but now the Club was being run rather more as a business, with increased powers being given to executive staff.

For example, in April 1949, the committee decided to give the secretary the power to hire and fire staff, the power to determine wages and even to caution a member who may misbehave. Such powers are today, of course, accepted but then the secretaries were rather more beholden to their committees for support in such matters. This was another legacy of the Little years; the Club was now being conducted as a business and a successful business at that.