



Engineer Commander H S PLATT RN (ret)

[1890 – 1963]

Researchers have had no success in sourcing a clear photograph of Engineer Commander Platt – despite his long association with the Club.

Commander Platt was elected to Life Membership of the Club in 1944.

Commander Platt was President of the Club in 1932 - 33

Horace Sydney Platt ¹was born on 2 June 1890 at Waverley, NSW. He was the son of Thomas Worthington Platt, a foreman, and Christina (née McIntosh). They subsequently lived at Granville, NSW.

He was educated at NSW Government schools and Government Technical College, Granville NSW – completing his studies in 1907. He then served a 5-year apprenticeship at Clyde Engineering, NSW. Platt then had 5 years sea experience (attaining a 1st Class (English) Board of Trade Marine Engineering Certificate) as a Chief Refrigeration Engineer with the Blue Star Line. It is possible that his employment had some form of reservation from military service; however, while in England he joined the Royal Navy in 1917.

Platt's World War I service in the Royal Navy is summarised below. The use of temporary rank was common for those whose service would likely cease with hostilities. The Captains' reports are included to give insight into the young officer.

7 September 1917	Temporary Engineer Sub Lieutenant
October – December 1917	HMS <i>Renown</i>
15 June 1918	Temporary Engineer Lieutenant

Captain's Report for promotion – "Zealous, capable and reliable Officer, thoroughly recommended for promotion. Capable of performing the duties of an officer in charge of a small ship in H.M Navy"

¹ In some documents he is named "Henry" – whether in error or his personal preference is unknown

We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.

Please do not reproduce them or distribute them outside of the Club membership.

January 1919

Captain's report (HMS *Resolute*) – "Above Average. Spanish (conversational), Cricket. A very zealous, hardworking and capable officer who takes a great interest in his work. He has an excellent technical and practical knowledge of marine engineering and is popular with his men. Takes a great interest in sports."

May 1920

transferred to Special Reserve of Engineer Officers RN

Platt married Dorothy Emma Elizabeth (née Couldrey) on 6 March 1920 at the District Registry Office at Chelsea, London. She was then aged 20, 10 years Platt's junior. It was reported that Platt returned to Australia on "naval duties" four days after the marriage. In March 1921, Dorothy joined Platt in Melbourne, and they lived in Northbridge, Sydney before settling in Brisbane. They were together until it is alleged that Platt deserted Dorothy in October 1927. Dorothy applied for divorce, which was not contested, and was granted in September 1937. She had returned to London earlier, and died there in 1987.



This vignette from the Daily Standard of 1928 perhaps indicates Platt's stature in Brisbane society

Between the Wars, Platt continued his Royal Navy naval service:

1922 – 25	Activated for "Training" in Australia
15 June 1926	Engineer Lieutenant Commander
June 1935	Removed from Special List of Engineer Officers of Special Reserve (on attaining age of 45 years)

In civil life Platt was principally the proprietor of an electrical engineering business. In the 1930s he was advertising the supply of motors and refrigerator equipment from premises in Elizabeth St Brisbane. Also, in the 1930s he conducted the Brisbane Engineering Academy - which prepared engineers for government professional qualifications and licencing.

In November 1938 Platt, a consulting engineer, returned from a world tour, which he conducted for the purpose of studying the latest developments in mechanical engineering, refrigeration, air conditioning, factory and public building construction. Platt declared that "... he had seen and

investigated wonders of engineering and development which had shown how far behind the times was Australia, and the methods adopted here.”

In World War II, Platt served in the RAN:

26 February 1941	Engineer Lieutenant Commander - called up from Special Reserve
1941-42	Engineer Overseer Maryborough and Bundaberg (possibly involving Walkers shipyard in Maryborough and Bundaberg Foundry)
1942	Acting Engineer Commander as Engineering Officer, Base Staff, Brisbane
27 March 1946	Discharged from HMAS <i>Rushcutter</i>

He was granted the War Service Rank of Engineer Commander

1950 Reverted to RN (Retired List)

Platt has one of the longest associations with the Club's management of any member. He served for 22 years on Club committees, including his term of office as President. Consequently, Platt figures in Club folk-lore – some of it re-told below:

It is believed that 1929 was the year in which the Club acquired one of its most treasured trophies, namely, the navigation lights from the cruiser HMAS *Sydney*, famous for vanquishing the German raider *Emden* at Cocos Island in 1914. The lights are now mounted on the port and starboard sides of the front door of the Wickham Terrace building and add distinction to the Club entrance, particularly when illuminated at night-time. It is believed that that Engineer Lieutenant Commander H S Platt purchased them for the Club 'in the south'.

In June 1937 it appears that coffee with lunch was a new innovation, at a time when the aromatic bean from Brazil was starting to gain popularity in this tea drinking nation, and that *man for all seasons*, Engineer Lieutenant Commander H S Platt, volunteered to instruct the caterer in 'the art of making coffee'.

Another early problem for the committee was that the presidents' honour board was full and there was nowhere to record Major General Durrant's name. As was frequently the case in matters as diverse as the installation of electrical equipment, the acquisition of war trophies or structural problems Engineer Lieutenant Commander H S Platt ('Plattie' to his friends) had the answer; he would have a new board, an exact replica of the old one, made at his own expense and donate it to the Club. It was quickly resolved that Commander Platt's 'generous offer be accepted with great pleasure' and, as good as his word, he had the new board up on the wall within a very short time.

The redoubtable Platt was the Club's honorary engineer. As his rank indicates, he had been a naval engineering officer and was a skilled 'tinkerer' with all kinds of machinery and equipment. In civilian life he was the proprietor of an electrical engineering business. As well as being an enthusiastic committeeman, he was the Club's chief (and unofficial) handyman for many years, and its maker of model ships for decoration at functions.



This cartoon is hanging in the Club and has one of the few likenesses held of Platt. The subject is the Club committee of 1946-47 on the move to the new Wickham Terrace building, with the redoubtable "Lal" Little as President.

Platt is the figure with the pipe at the bottom left. He is holding a "T" square – representing his engineering skills.

The then Lieutenant-Colonel Jack Amies is at the bottom centre (left) with pound notes for ears – symbolising his financial skills. The allusions to other decorations (the trophy, the chef's hats [*toques blanche*], the propeller? and the book) are lost in antiquity.



The Club Committee taking possession of the new premises at 183 Wickham Terrace in 1947. It is thought that Platt is second from the right holding the pipe.

Following his divorce, Platt lived in and around New Farm until his later years when he moved to Broadbeach. He died there on 12 February 1963.

[Research may have discovered some inaccuracies in Platt's post-nominals quoted in other places.

In some records he is credited with "EM". The only recorded use of this is for the Efficiency Medal – awarded under the Imperial Honours to Warrant and non-commissioned officers – for which he would have been ineligible. The Navy List notes a seniority category of "Emergency" which is applied to Platt's entry – and "EM" may have been used to signify this. "EM" does not appear in the Navy List as an authorised abbreviation.

In his post World War I service, he is correctly entitled RNSR – Royal Navy Special Reserve.

While Platt served in both the Royal Navy (1917 to 1935) and the Royal Australian Navy (1941 to 1946) his service record and the Navy List shows him being admitted to the Retired List of the RN in 1950 – possibly as an election by him.]

Sources included:

- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents
- Trove <https://trove.nla.gov.au>
- *Courier Mail* 9 June 1937
- *Daily Standard* 15 December 1928
- Commonwealth of Australia The Navy List as at 30 June 1950 p183