



Brigadier J.L. AMIES CBE, ED

[1913– 1996]



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Brigadier Amies was elected to Life Membership of the Club in 1994.

Brigadier Amies was a Trustee of the Club from 1989 to 1993.

Brigadier Amies was President of the Club in 1950-51

Introduction

Brigadier Jack Lowell Amies CBE ED was a leader in the military and business worlds. His military career began in 1930 as a 17-year-old cadet. He served in the Militia before the Second World War and was commissioned in 1935. Amies served in the United Kingdom, North Africa and New Guinea. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel (as Commanding Officer 15th Battalion) in 1942 when he was only 28. After the war, he returned to his profession as a chartered accountant and was appointed to the boards of directors of major Australian companies, as well as serving in the CMF as Commanding Officer of 9th Battalion (1948) and Commander of 7th Brigade (1954). He was a devoted and beloved family man.

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.

Family

Jack Lowell Amies was born in Sydney on 14 December 1913, the son of John Thomas Amies, a department manager at David Jones and the former Ivy Violet French. After the family moved to Brisbane, he was educated at the Sherwood and Sandgate State Schools and at the Brisbane State Commercial High School.

Following his father's premature death when he was manager of Ward Motors, Mackay, Jack joined Kennedy, Bowly and Manson and studied part-time for his accountancy qualifications. During his youth and young adulthood, he was an enthusiastic cricketer and a tennis player, a game he played into his later years.

Jack Amies married Mary (Molly) Isabelle Wetherell on 11 January 1940.



The United Service Club

Brigadier Amies joined the United Service Club in 1935 and served on the Club Committee from 1945 to 1960. He was President in 1950-51; and a Trustee from 1989 to 1993.

During his time on the Committee the Club moved in 1947 to its present Wickham Terrace premises. The Committee at the time (Lieutenant Colonel L.A. Little – President) was captured in the cartoon below which is displayed in the Club. The likeness third from left, bottom row with pound notes for ears is the then Lieutenant Colonel J.L. Amies OBE.



Military Service

Amies joined the Militia as a Cadet in 1930 (Regimental Number 1/21001) and was commissioned in the Field Artillery on 14 August 1935. In October 1939 he was posted to 6th Division Artillery and joined the 2nd AIF on 28 October 1939 (QX6007). He was posted to 10 Battery 2/5th Field Regiment; and in January 1940 to 2/1st Anti-Tank Regiment. He embarked for overseas service on the *Queen Mary* on 5 May 1940; and in June 1940 he was promoted Captain and corps transferred and was posted to 2/31st Battalion.

The battalion was encamped at Colchester in England in 1940 before its deployment to the Middle East. When King George VI inspected the battalion in November 1940, Captain Jack Amies, as Adjutant, was privileged to precede the inspection party by 10 paces. One of the royal aides, an officer in the Grenadier Guards, was very surprised to learn that the battalion was not a regular army unit.

In June and July 1941, Australia's 7th Division, as part of an Allied force in Syria and Lebanon, fought the pro-German Vichy French to prevent the establishment of a German presence which could threaten British bases in Palestine and its broader strategic position in the eastern Mediterranean. As part of the 25th Brigade, 2/31st Battalion was tasked to move north through the mountainous centre of Lebanon towards Syria. In one action against vigorous Vichy French resistance in Lebanon, a platoon of the Battalion was pinned down by a machine gun emplacement at Green Hill which dominated Jezzine. Corporal Jim Gordon stormed the machine gun post and overwhelmed the four members of the gun crew. Green Hill was captured. Captain Jack Amies wrote the recommendation for Jim Gordon's Victoria Cross. On 12 July 1941 an armistice was signed between the Allies and the Vichy French. In that month Amies was promoted Major. The 2/31st Battalion then undertook occupation duties at Amchite and was then tasked with fortifying Jebel Tourbel north of Tripoli. The battalion remained on defensive duties until February 1942.

Amies returned to Australia in March 1942; and on 11 August 1942 was promoted Temporary Lieutenant-Colonel to command 15th Battalion AMF.

The 15th Battalion was sent initially to Milne Bay, remaining there for six months. It moved to Buna in July, but did not remain there long, transferring to Morobe a few weeks later.

As Commanding Officer, Amies, appealed to the battalion to volunteer for service as part of the AIF. While some already had volunteered, most of the men were still classified as Militia personnel, which meant that the battalion was restricted in where it could serve and was liable to be broken up. To be classified as an AIF battalion, the newly passed *Defence (Citizen Military Forces) Act 1943* required 65 per cent or more of the personnel to volunteer for service outside Australian territory. The response was considerable and, by August 1943, the battalion was gazetted as an AIF battalion.

Later that month, the battalion moved to Nassau Bay, and was committed to combat for the first time, occupying a position around Mount Tambu, known as Davidson's Ridge, before marching to Tambu Bay.

The Salamaua campaign proceeded in conjunction with the effort to capture Lae. The Japanese garrison was reinforced by 6,000 troops from Salamaua as the 7th Division advanced from the Markham Valley and the 9th Division advanced along the coast from beaches to the east. On 31 August, 15th Battalion of the 3rd Division joined the fighting, advancing around the right flank of the US 162nd Infantry Regiment and attacked the junction between the Lokanu and Scout Ridges. After 10 days of heavy fighting and hard going up the steep slopes, 15th Battalion secured the two ridges and advanced towards Nuk Nuk as Japanese resistance crumbled. The Allies entered Salamaua on 11 September. The 15th Battalion was committed to pursuing the withdrawing Japanese and, after fierce fighting, entered Lae in late October. The battalion remained in the vicinity of Lae until June 1944, when it was withdrawn to Australia.

Amies relinquished command of the Battalion on 14 September 1944 and was posted as an Instructor at the Land HQ Tactical School, Canungra. At the conclusion of hostilities, he was posted to the Reserve of Officers in October 1945.

He was awarded the OBE in December 1943 and was Mentioned-in Dispatches in 1944.

Amies activated from the Reserve of Officers on 1 April 1948 and was appointed Commanding Officer of 9th Battalion – an appointment he held until October 1951. In February 1952 he was promoted to Colonel and appointed as GSO1 CMF, Northern Command. Promoted Brigadier in 1953 he was appointed as Commander 7th Brigade in April 1954.

Amies was Honorary ADC to the Governor General (Sir William Slim) from April 1956 to April 1959;

He was also Honorary Colonel of the Moreton Regiment from 1958-60; and Honorary Colonel of the Royal Queensland Regiment from 1967 to 1973.



In April 1957, Brigadier Amies was appointed as a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE).

After the War

As Chairman of the Canteens Trust Fund from 1953 to 1972, Amies worked tirelessly to provide welfare and educational benefits for the widows and children of men and women who had served in the Second World War. From 1961-64, he was President of the United Service Institute.

His service to the community included life-long membership of Scouting Queensland. He was a Scout Master in the early 1930s, assistant Chief Commissioner in 1946, President of its Executive Committee 1968-72 and was awarded life membership. He was also President of the Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (1965-67) and national chairman of the Medical Benefits Fund of Australia. He was a member of the Board of the Faculty of Commerce at the University of Queensland (1959-70) and, in 1971, was appointed first chairman of the Council of Queensland Institute of Technology (now the Queensland University of Technology).

Brigadier Amies, as chartered accountant and partner in the firm Kennedy, Bowly and Manson, gave his time and talent to his profession as Queensland Registrar of the Australian Society of Accountants and to the Australian Institute of Management as a speaker at its courses and as a director. He was appointed to the national boards of leading companies including the National Australia Bank, City Mutual Life Assurance Society (Queensland chairman), Roneo Vickers Pty Ltd, Australian Fixed Trusts (Qld), RM Gow and Co Ltd, Macdonald Hamilton & Co Pty Ltd and Hyne and Sons Pty Ltd.

Brigadier Amies died on 7 November 1996, survived by his wife, Molly, two children and six grandsons. After cremation, his remains were laid to rest in the Columbarium at St Andrew's Anglican Church, Indooroopilly.

Sources included:

- This Note was written by Mrs Helen Gregory, daughter of Brigadier Amies
- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents
- Australian War Memorial AWM 52/8/3/54 15th Battalion war diary
- Australian War Memorial AWM52/8/3/31, 2/31st Battalion war diary
- Australia in the War of 1939-45. Series 1 Army, Vol VI, The New Guinea Offensives.
- P Bradley, *To Salamaua*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2010
- J Laffin, *Forever Forward*, Sydney, 2/31st Battalion Association
- W Park, *Beyond Adversity, 'U' company 15th Battalion 1941-42*, Sydney, Big Sky, 2010
- G Pratten, *Australian Battalion Commanders in the Second World War*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2009.