



## Captain G.A.H. CURTIS RD, RAN

[1859 – 1933]



**Captain Curtis was President of the Club in 1915.**

**Captain Curtis was elected to Life Membership of the Club – possibly between 1910 and 1928**

George Arthur Hamilton Curtis was born in Simla, Bengal, in India on 28 October 1859. His father was Colonel James Charles Curtis (Bengal Staff Corps), and his mother Harriet (née Hamilton). He was the eldest of the children – having 2 sisters and 3 brothers (one of whom died at birth).

There are records of Curtis attending a school at St Helens, Jersey, in 1871, aged 11. It would appear to have been conforming to the practice of English colonial officers sending their children “home” to primary and secondary boarding school.

In October 1876 (possibly on leaving school), Curtis was indentured as an apprentice seaman in the Merchant Navy to the British Shipowners Co. Ltd of Liverpool. His basic training was on HMS *Conway* – a “school” ship moored in the Mersey River. From 1876 to 1887 he served on various merchant ships. He sought advancement as shown by these qualifications from the Board of Trade, London:

- April 1881                      Second Mate’s Certificate
- August 1883                    First Mate’s Certificate
- September 1887                Master’s Certificate

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In Brisbane in 1891 Curtis married Elizabeth Mary (nee MacDonnell) [1864-1941]. The family lived at "Simla", Kangaroo Point and New Farm. They had two children - Lilian Sophie Hamilton Curtis (1894 – 1898), and Cecil Arthur Hamilton Curtis (1895 – 1970). Cecil joined the RAN as a sailor in April 1918 and was discharged on 31 May 1919. He was an engineer.

There is a gap in researched history between 1887 and 1891 – it is possible that Curtis continued as a Merchant Marine (RNR) master – whose travels may have taken him to Brisbane. His marriage to Elizabeth in 1891 appears to pre-date his first appointment to the Queensland Naval Forces in 1893.

The first RAN Navy List of October 1905 shows Curtis as a Royal Naval Reserve Lieutenant with seniority of 19 January 1893. And with "Foreign going Master's certificate and Pilotage Exemption Queensland"; and 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant of HMQS *Gayundah*. His appointment on *Gayundah* appears to have been from 1893 to 1907.

- September 1909 Lieutenant, Acting Naval Commandant South Australia
- October 1909 Lieutenant, Acting Naval Commandant Brisbane

Curtis served as District Naval Officer, Brisbane from 1911 to 1922 apart from service on HMAS *Psyche* [Nov 1917 – Mar 1918] and on HMAS *Penguin* [Mar – Apr 1918].

- March 1911 Promoted Commander (allotted to RAN Citizen Naval Forces)
- April 1917 promoted Captain
- August 1921 extension of appointment as Captain to October 1922
- October 1922 to Retired List

In June 1911, Curtis gave evidence at the Broome WA court as the Commander of *Gayundah* and Acting Naval Commandant of Queensland that, in May that year at Scott's Reef (in the Timor Sea 400 km off Broome), his vessel had apprehended two ships suspected of smuggling.

Curtis was awarded the Decoration for Officers of the Royal Naval Reserve ["RD"]. The medal was instituted in 1908 for 15 years' service, with war service counting double – he was possibly eligible by the date the award was instituted.

He died in Brisbane on 18 August 1933 and is buried at Toowong Cemetery. He was survived by his wife Elizabeth, who died in Brisbane in 1941, and his son.

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
- <https://www.navy.gov.au/media-room/publications/navy-list>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decoration for Officers of the Royal Naval Reserve](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decoration_forOfficers_of_the_Royal_Naval_Reserve)