



Brigadier G. L. LEE CMG, DSO

[1860 – 1939]



Colonel Lee was President of the Club in 1912 and then as Brigadier in 1916

George Leonard Lee was born on 25 June 1860 at West Maitland, New South Wales, the son of John Lee [1833-1913], draper and later merchant, and his wife, Mary Ann (née Eckford) [1836-1883]. His younger siblings were Thomas Benedict [1867-1890] and Lucy Amelia [1874- 1961].

He was educated at Sauchu House School, West Maitland, and Armidale Grammar School. He then worked for a while in the family business, John Lee & Sons, West Maitland. He was a well-known horseman and sportsman, and keen on polo.

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.

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On 2 January 1896 he married Emma Onus (née Town) [1867-1948] at St Ann's Anglican Church, Homebush, Sydney; they had no children.

His military career was long and distinguished:

October 1889	Appointed as Second Lieutenant, New South Wales Lancers at Maitland.
January 1890	Appointed Lieutenant, New South Wales Lancers, During the maritime strike of 1890 he acted as adjutant of the partially paid cavalry and mounted rifles who were enrolled as special police in Sydney.
1891	He went to England for training and by October 1892 had qualified in an equitation course at the Cavalry School, Canterbury; at an Army Service Corps school; and at the School of Musketry, Hythe. He also trained for several months with the 20 th Hussars at Aldershot.
December 1892	Promoted Captain, New South Wales Permanent Staff, as Adjutant New South Wales Lancers
October 1899	Promoted Major, New South Wales Permanent Staff.
October 1899	The New South Wales Lancers mobilized a draft to reinforce their squadron which was proceeding to the war in South Africa from England after training there. Lee commanded the draft which joined the squadron in South Africa in December and then took command of the Lancer contingent. His unit was employed in operations around Colesberg, the relief of Kimberley, and actions at Paardeberg, Poplar Grove, Driefontein, Zand River, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Diamond Hill and in the Transvaal east of Pretoria.

For his service in South Africa he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order; mentioned in dispatches and had six clasps to his Queen's South Africa Medal.

October 1900	Returned to Australia. Served as Staff Officer of the Mounted Brigade, and Commandant of the Cavalry School.
July 1902	Promoted Major, District Headquarters, Victoria, and Assistant Adjutant-General
December 1902	Promoted Brevet Lieutenant Colonel,
1904	Appointed to Administrative and Instructional Staff ("A&I Staff")
1907	Posted to New South Wales
December 1909	Promoted Lieutenant Colonel, A&I Staff,
1911-12	Commandant 6 th Military District, Tasmania
December 1912	Promoted Colonel, A&I Staff,
1912-17	Commandant 1 st Military District, Queensland
March 1916	Promoted Brigadier-General, A&I Staff,

He received a CMG in July 1917 while a Temporary Brigadier at 1 Military District.

1917-18	Commanded 2 nd Military District as Honorary Major General
1915-20	Aide-de-Camp to the Governor General (The Right Honourable Sir Ronald Craufurd Munro-Ferguson GCMG, PC)
May 1920	To Retired List as Honorary Lieutenant General

Tributes to Lee's personality and ability include praise of his fine horsemanship, geniality, and ripe judgement; there was 'no hypocrisy in his make up' and he would not tolerate it in anyone under him.

In retirement he worked two oyster leases at Port Stephens, New South Wales

General Lee's involvement with the Club was during his postings to 1st Military District and reflected to some degree the practice of the Club's founders to rotate the Presidency amongst the senior Naval and Military appointments in the State. Lee was President as a Colonel in 1912 and again as a Brigadier in 1916 when he held the appointment as Commandant of the Military District.

The period of 1912 to 1917 was the only time that he served or lived in Queensland. His "home" was Sydney where he was a longstanding member of The Union Club.

Brigadier Lee died in Sydney on 13 April 1939.

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
- Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 10, (MUP), 1986