

DAVIES. Harold Whitridge
(aka Pete)
1894 - 1946
ED MB BS FRACP



Harold Whitridge Davies was born on 27 June 1894 in Adelaide. He was the eldest son of Dr. Edward Harold Davies, and Ina Jane Deland (daughter of a Gawler businessman). His father was a musician and Professor of Music and Director of the Elder Conservatorium of the University of Adelaide. Davies went to Prince Alfred College where he joined the Army Cadet Corps. He studied medicine at the University of Adelaide, graduating in 1917 and whilst at the University continued his military career in the Citizen Military Forces as a Lieutenant in the 78th Infantry Bn. He started medicine as the Acting House Physician in the Isolation Block and assistant in the Venereal Night Clinic at the Adelaide Hospital.

Davies was appointed as a Captain in the Australian Army Medical Corps on 6 July 1917. He was described as 5ft 11ins in height, medium complexion and fair hair with grey eyes. He was attached as General Reinforcements and embarked in Sydney for England in August 1917. He went on to France and was posted to 1 AGH in Rouen in November 1917. In January 1918 he was posted to 9 Fd Amb, and in April 1917 he was posted as the MO to 33 Bn. He subsequently became sick with what was described as 'debility' and sent on leave to England in July 1918. In September 1918 he was posted to 3 Pioneer Bn in France as the Medical Officer.

Davies returned to London in early 1919 and was given leave to attend a Medical Research course.

He then was given 3 months leave without pay from June 1919 to work to study the effects of dust inhalation at Askhurst Military Hospital in Oxford in the laboratory of Dr J.S. Haldane. It was reported that he had taken an 'exceptionally keen' interest in the subject of his research and he rendered 'valuable service' throughout his stay at Askhurst. He returned to Australia in July 1920 and appointment terminated 12 August 1920. He was issued the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

He continued with his research interest after the war and went to Edinburgh with Professor JC Meakins with whom he had worked at Oxford. He was appointed a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow in 1923 for one year at the Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research in New York. Here he was associated with some of the leading respiratory physiologists in America. In 1930 Davies returned to Australia as the Professor of Physiology at the University of Sydney. He supported staff members to be awarded Rockefeller fellowships and made two expeditions to Central Australia to study the adaptation of aboriginal people to water deprivation in hot and arid conditions. Due to the depression of the 1930s and work pressure of teaching Davies was not able to advance research in his department as he envisaged. However, he was an honorary consultant at three teaching hospitals and a Foundation Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians in 1938.

Throughout this post war period Davies was a member of the Army Reserve. He was promoted to Major in 1935 and Lieutenant Colonel in 1938 commanding 9 Fd Amb in NSW. At the outbreak of World War Two he was mobilized and continued to command 9 Fd Amb. He was awarded Efficiency Decoration. Harold Whitridge Davies never married and left Sydney University in May 1946. He died one month later as a result of falling down stairs in the Imperial Service Club in Sydney.

Sources: Photo; AWM.EO1625

*Family History from Dr Walford Thyer
<http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/scripts/Imagine.asp?B=1902307>*