

St Paul's College Commemoration Service, 11th September 2014, D J Pockley

The family is honored and grateful for the recognition given to Brian Pockley and particularly to remember the other 19 members of St Paul's College who lost their lives in World War One.

Brian Colden Antill Pockley was born on the fourth of April 1890. He had brothers Jack and Guy (my grandfather) and sisters Phyllis and Nell

Perhaps a little that I have gleaned about him might be of interest, in particular I am grateful to Graham Robertson, the Deputy Head Master of Shore School.

He entered Shore School in 1904 and quickly became known for his sporting ability. He rowed in the 1st IV, swam for the School and was selected in the 1st XV for three years from 1906 - 1908. In Athletics he was a star. In the School Athletics Championship in his final year he won the 100 yards, 220 yards, 440 yards, 800 yards, high jump, hurdles and long jump and came 2nd in the mile. At the GPS Carnival he was the All Schools Champion in the hurdles and his jump of 6.3 metres in the long jump qualified him as Long Jump Champion for all schools in Australia and England, beating his nearest rival by 30cm.

In Rugby, Pockley played at outside back, and being the fastest player in the side, he was a regular try scorer. In 1908 he was captain of the 1st XV, which went through the season undefeated, winning 18 matches and drawing four. The side scored 292 points to the oppositions' 39. Pockley scored an average of one try per game and was named in the GPS 1st XV. It is worth pointing out that, of the fifteen players in this side all but one served in World War I and of those five were killed, one in each year of the war.

Brian did not just devote himself to games. He was a very good scholar gaining straight A's in his junior examinations, winning the Geometry Medal for first in the State and he qualified for entry into medicine. He was also a member of the Debating Society, took part in theatrical productions and was a member of the School's first Cadet Corps in 1908 being named as one of two captains – Shore's first Cadet Officers.

Pockley joined St. Paul's College at university and continued to excel academically, and in Rugby and Athletics where he was awarded Blues. In 1913 he was close to selection in the NSW Rugby team, but was unfortunately injured. At the end of 1913 he graduated with Class II Honours in Medicine and started work at Sydney Hospital.

On 14 August 1914, his brother Jack's birthday, who also lost his life during the war, at Villers Brettignies in 1918, Brian enlisted in the army.

Three days before war broke out and he was appointed a Captain. Six days later he found himself on board HMS Berrima as Regimental Medical Officer bound for a destination, which was secret. They were in fact heading to New Britain where they were to capture a vital part in the German Pacific wireless installation, which had been set up to send news to Berlin.

On 6 September he was moved from the Berrima to HMAS Sydney and was attached to the first landing force under Lt Bowen with fifty naval reserves.

Unbeknown to the landing party the Germans had dug trenches across the narrow jungle track to the wireless station and pits alongside it, with one to three Germans in

each trench and about nine native police troopers who climbed trees to act as snipers.

In the first fight a German officer, Mauderer, was shot in the hand and captured. Pockley, noticing Mauderer was losing a lot of blood, took him aside to attend to him. Sheltering in a hole in the ground, Pockley operated on him to save his life. Mauderer was taken back to the ship and survived to tell of what happened. He was very grateful to Pockley and said he was a 'very humane man'.

Shortly afterwards further up the track Able Seaman Williams of the Naval Reserve was shot through the chest and was brought back to Pockley for treatment. Pockley saw that there was little he could do for Williams and got his Naval Orderly, William Kember, to care for him and take him back to base. Pockley was wearing a Red Cross armband, which alerted the enemy that he was a medical officer so they would not shoot him and he took it off and wound it around Kember's hat to protect him from being shot. When Kember asked Pockley how he would manage without his protection, Pockley said he would be OK.

Pockley then went up to the fighting front and was shot. He lost consciousness and was taken back to the Berrima at 9.00 am. He later regained consciousness and, according to the Lieutenant with him at the time, Brian Pockley passed away peacefully.

Pockley and Williams were buried side by side at Herbertshohe (now Kopoko) at about 6.00pm that day. Brian Pockley the first Australian Officer to be killed in World War I. Brian was reinterred and now lies near Rabaul at Bita Paka war cemetery where a remembrance service is also being held today as we speak and also in Melbourne.

Today I have brought with me a copy of the New Testament he had with him, given to me by my great aunt Nell at my confirmation. In her letter to me she quotes John 3 verse 21,

"But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be manifest, that they are wrought in God."

Included is the telegram from Brian's aunt to him before he left, no doubt similar ones from many of the family members of who we are particularly remembering today, "Au revoir, love and best wishes and come back soon, Aunt Enid".

In the back is written,

"My dear Captain passed away about 1pm Friday 11th September 1914 having been mortally wounded at Herbertshohe, New Britain.

We buried him with military honors in a pretty little cemetery near the shore, close to where the troops landed.

C.W. Smith

Captains Orderly

Philippians 1, 3"

"I thank God upon every remembrance of you."

We remember today all that died and suffered in WW1, particularly those members of St Paul's College.