



Uncle Joe McElhone

Country doctor and loved man of the services

1896-1947

When I was three and a half, my mother took me by overnight train from Eugowra to Sydney. I can remember going with her to visit a man lying in a hospital bed looking out on an upstairs verandah. I know now that he was Uncle Joe McElhone, lying very ill in St Vincent's Hospital, Darlinghurst, and that this was to be Mum's final visit. He was my godfather. He had no children of his own. Now, more than sixty years later, I decided to get to know him.

Marianne Payten

Cowra August 2014

EARLY LIFE

Joseph Benedict McElhone was the youngest son of John McElhone (1861-1944)¹ of “Malolo”² 86 Johnstone Street, Annandale, and later of Redfern and Glebe, and of Bridget (née Toohey) (1861-1937)³. His father was well known in the early life of Sydney as the proprietor of the Premier Cab, Bus and Livery business in the Redfern district and later as Chairman of Directors of the Catholic Land and Building Company. Joe was born on May 4, 1896, educated at Holy Cross College, Ryde⁴ and St Joseph’s College, Hunter’s Hill, and studied medicine at the University of Sydney from 1912-1919.

His years at St Joseph’s (1909-1911) showed his promise as a student, a leader and a sportsman. He arrived at the school on 6 February 1909 having won a state bursary. He had a very high profile in his student days at St Joseph’s: in 1911, his final year, he was an officer in the College’s Cadet Corps, (Sergeant J McElhone, First Section Leader), was one of four student editors of the substantial student quarterly magazine “S.J.C.M.” and an officer in the Sodality of the Children of Mary. He was stroke of the College’s First Four at the Head of the River, 26 April 1911, represented the school in the 1911 Annual GPS Athletics competition and played 2nd XV Rugby. Academically, he was a very good all-rounder: in his Senior year 1911 he attained 2nd Aggregate, 1st in Christian Doctrine, Latin, French, English, Chemistry; 2nd in Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, Mechanics; Medal for Religious Knowledge, Old Boys’ Medal for Literary Composition and 4th in Good Conduct. His pass in the NSW Senior examination admitted him to all schools of the University of Sydney except Engineering⁵. Still today JB McElhone, in the words of the College Archivist, is remembered as “a very highly regarded Old Boy of the school who, in his comparatively short life, achieved so much and did so much good.”

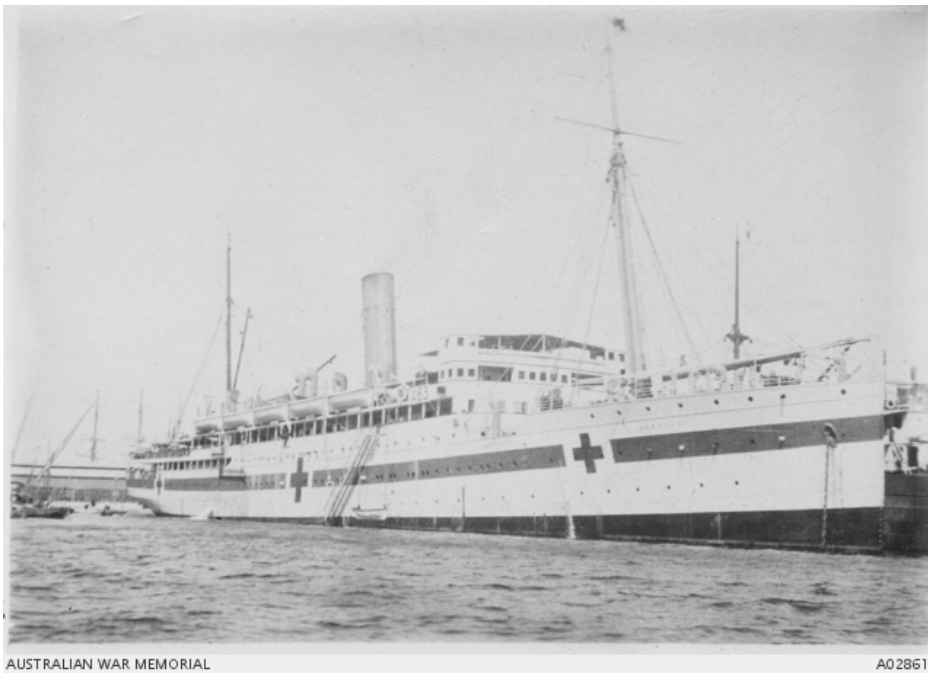
WORLD WAR I

Joe chose the medical degree and was half way through it when World War I broke out. Australian forces were suffering terrible losses, so he decided to sign up and serve on a hospital ship. In June 1915, although he was only just 19, he gave his age as 21⁶ and enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces. This photo taken on June 20 1915, a month before they left, shows a handsome young Joe in his new uniform. It is preserved in the State Archives at Kingswood in a collection of photos of doctors. How full of promise he looks!



*Joseph B McElhone, 20.1.15
Photo in State Archives of NSW ⁷*

Joe was sent at once to England on board the *Orsova*⁸ and returned as Lance Corporal serving as an orderly on Australia's first fully equipped floating hospital, the state-of-the-art *Karoola*, which had been fitted up in England.⁹



*Hospital Ship Karoola*¹⁰

The *Karoola* was important in transporting soldiers who were injured or ill from Gallipoli.¹¹ With Joe on board, she left Southampton on September 9 and began her duties transporting sick and wounded Allied soldiers, first from Alexandria to London. On this voyage, *Karoola* made a dramatic rescue from the *Highland Warrior*¹², a British ship loaded with passengers, cargo and bullion which in a fog had run ashore on the Spanish coast. After an exchange of messages with other ships in the vicinity, the *Karoola's* master decided to turn back to her. Arriving at the scene of the wreck in the early morning, the *Karoola's* boats rescued the *Highland Warrior's* 29 passengers, carrying them from ship to ship in a coal basket!

Back in the Aegean, the *Karoola* was almost certainly one of the fleet of hospital ships, mostly converted ocean liners, waiting off the island of Lemnos¹³ for serious casualties as they were evacuated by barge from Gallipoli beaches to the field hospital, then to the hospital ship and on to Alexandria.¹⁴ As we can see in the TV series *Anzac Girls*, as well as their battle wounds, soldiers suffered from severe dental and eye problems, typhoid and dysentery — flies were a terrible plague. In October, at Alexandria, homeward bound, the *Karoola* embarked nearly five hundred Australians who had been wounded at Gallipoli¹⁵ arriving in Sydney to a heroes' welcome in early December.¹⁶ What medical training!

Joe was then discharged from the Army¹⁷ so as to complete his medical studies — he had four years to go — and finally graduated M.B.B.S. in 1919¹⁸. Interestingly, it seems his place on the *Karoola* was taken by his eldest brother John, a compiler in the Bureau of Statistics, who enlisted within a week of Joe's arrival home¹⁹.

More medical experience came when, from February to July 1919, the Spanish influenza epidemic raged all over Australia. A temporary hospital was set up in the Industrial Pavilion at the old Sydney Showground at Moore Park. Desperate calls were made by the Red Cross for extra doctors and nurses.^{20 21} As a final year medical student, Joe became involved in caring for victims²². One of his fellow students recalled:

It was a dreadful time. Very short of doctors. Emergency hospitals everywhere - the Deaf and Dumb Institute, the Showground. I hadn't been in a hospital yet. I couldn't take a temperature but they showed you what to do. We went out on rounds to the people. I suppose we looked like doctors. The doctors were so busy²³.



Nurses leaving Blackfriars Depot, Chippendale 1919²⁴

KEMPSEY

In October, with final exams out of the way, Joe was engaged to be married to Nellie Dwyer, the eldest of Mum's sisters — our Auntie Nell²⁵. Joe moved to Kempsey to set up his medical practice and organise their home, "Musetta", a Californian bungalow^{26 27}, located with his surgery on the corner of River and Marsh Streets, West Kempsey.²⁸ On June 8 1920 they were married at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church, Randwick. Just back from their honeymoon, they were amongst the throng at Randwick Races when Prince Edward the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) visited Sydney²⁹.



"Musetta", the McElhones' house in Kempsey. (Macleay River Historical Society Photo Collection)

About 5'8" tall, of stocky build, with blue/grey eyes and dark hair — in later years a crew cut — Joe was genial, witty and full of fun. He became a treasured member of the Dwyer family, gaining much credit a few years later for the often repeated story of his capture of a midnight robber who had broken into their home at 25 Mulwarree Avenue, Randwick.³⁰

A devout Catholic, Joe was a passionate racegoer and thoroughbred owner, and was active in rifle-shooting and boxing—he had represented Sydney Uni

as a boxer in his student days. He played golf with a handicap of ten³¹. He was an early shareholder in Radio Kempsey.³² As an Alderman and Mayor of Kempsey, he was a prime mover in securing an aerodrome at nearby Aldavilla as well as in building the town swimming pool where his name is still honoured.



*Dr McElhone with his gun dogs.
(Photo from Macleay River Historical Society Photo Collection)*



At the mike for 2KM³³

He is remembered as “one who gave to the poor the best medical aid without thought of remuneration.”³⁴ For many years he was Government Medical Officer, assigned to care for veterans³⁵. Joe attended an indigenous man, Robert St John, on his deathbed –Robert had been at St Joseph’s, Hunters Hill in its very first days in 1881, and was the first Aboriginal to attend the College. Written for the boys of 2008, the College Magazine says:³⁶

Probably there would have been some reminiscing between them on the way things were “back then”. One suspects that at least J.B. was aware, if few others at the time were, that he was treating a pretty special person in the history of St Joseph’s College.

Kempsey was quite remote from Sydney in those early days: hours of driving from Sydney with several punts over the rivers. Starting out there with no car, Joe had to rig up his horse and sulky for late night calls³⁷. So there was great excitement when Nell and Joe bought their new car, the latest model, a 1922 Essex. Mary Makinson remembers at age 4 or 5 begging to be allowed to ride in the back in the dickey seat³⁸. Amazingly I have found that it is still running as a vintage car³⁹!



Two views of the 1922 Essex, now a treasured vintage car⁴⁰

Joe and Nell spent almost twenty happy and full years in Kempsey. Nell with her wonderful ear, playing the piano and Joe with his rollicking baritone were an asset at any occasion. Our mother revelled in her visits to them. In later years as Uncle Joe he was accomplished in producing home-grown pantomime such as *Cinderella* with the Oxenham children, Nell's Sydney nieces and nephew⁴¹. And we still remember him in full voice with his music hall piece "Alfonso Spagoni the Toreador". But sadly this all came to an end when in September 1939 Australia was at war once more. To join up meant leaving his beloved medical practice and home.

WORLD WAR II AND POLITICS

Almost immediately, in spite of being 43 (over the usual age for service) Joe was down at Singleton to enlist again, being promoted over the years from Lieutenant to Captain⁴², Major^{43 44} and finally Lieutenant-Colonel, serving as a doctor in both the CMF and the AIF.

He had developed a profound understanding of the people of the Macleay district where he had worked for all those years. He was deeply concerned that their interests were being lost in the emergency of war.

So, in spite of his military and medical duties, he found time to stand against Sir Earle Page as an independent for the seat of Cowper in the Federal election of 1940⁴⁵. Interestingly, he had been a local president of the Labor Party years before⁴⁶ but had given it up in disgust at political parties! He gained 16% of the vote, making inroads into both Labor and Country Party (Page's) support.⁴⁷

He returned to Kempsey on leave in January 1942 and was shocked to see how the manpower drain was hitting production in the dairy industry.⁴⁸ He voiced this concern again when he stood a second time, taking leave from his army posting, to stand in the 1943 election, still challenging Sir Earle Page, but this time securing only 10% of the vote.



TO THE ELECTORS OF COWPER

West Kempsey,
16th August, 1943.

MY GOOD FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS,

For over twenty years I have lived amongst you, daily in and out of your houses. I have met you in your homes, on your farms, and in your business houses, I have carried on my work in your forests. You people of all sections of the community have been my care. Your kindness to me over that long period is deeply appreciated.

For the last three and a half years I have devoted all my energy and skill to the care of our gallant sons and brothers of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Merchant Navy and as Officer commanding an Australian Hospital Ship have been engaged in bringing back our sick and wounded boys from New Guinea. These, my friends, are the real saviours of Australia, not the politicians.

As I went round this huge electorate, I found hundreds of instances of neglect by the Commonwealth Government. As I stated fourteen months ago the manpower drain threatens the very life of the dairying industry, ruthless and inefficient bureaucrats are making regulations which, for some reason or another, all tend to impoverish the primary producer. There are hundreds of cases of individual manpower hardship, which a keen local member should have remedied in one week.

Your desperate need is a member who is not compelled to bow his neck to a party machine and has the ability, courage and determination to expose to the nation the injustice which is being handed to the people of Cowper.

compar.

The butter and pig meat production will, this year, fall without doubt to less than half of what the nation needs. Many farmers will be forced out of production, and no strong voice is heard speaking on your behalf. Within a few months, there will be unemployment in the timber industry because a regulation-mad Government does not realize that replacement of trucks and tractors and the supply of spare parts is vitally and immediately necessary. While the nation is crying out for primary produce, hundreds of acres of potatoes are allowed to rot in the ground because there is no labor to dig them. Over two hundred millions of our money is being squandered each year and neither machine has the courage to mention it or to improve matters.

These facts cannot be denied, they are matters of common knowledge. After Armistice over a million of our service men and women will be returning to civilian life. Many of them will be sick and wounded and unable to keep themselves, their mothers, wives and dependents. They are my comrades, and they and their dependents will receive the care they deserve for saving us from a fate worse than death.

Common Sense, Truth and Honor will solve our problems, political tricks and false promises will drive us into chaos and the depths of despair. Past members and Governments have failed you, the same people and parties will fail you again. Your hope lies in new independent blood. I have not failed my country or our soldiers in the hour of need—I will not fail you.

J. B. McELHONE.

VOTE—

[1] McELHONE, J. B.

Authorized by Andrew McElhone, M.P.

HAY

From December 1940 to February 1941⁴⁹ JB was stationed at the Internment Camp Hospital at Hay where his patients would have included ⁵⁰ many internees who had been shipped to Australia from England in horrific conditions on the notorious ship *Dunera*. Although they had fled Hitler's Europe for England, they were classed as "enemy aliens" in the United Kingdom, interned and deported to Australia. In fact the majority were anti-Nazis, most of them Jewish refugees from Germany and Poland⁵¹ and their cause became such an international scandal that they were released after less than a year. Another probable patient was Italian-Jewish alien/refugee Guido Tedeschi, grandfather of Mark, the former Director of Public Prosecutions, NSW and great-grandfather of Simon, the noted pianist.⁵²



Internment Camp Hay, artist's impression

DARWIN

In late February 1941, Uncle Joe was appointed to Darwin⁵³, as Assistant Director Army Medical Services for the Northern Territory, including the new 1200-bed 119 Australian General [Army] Hospital at Bagot, a Darwin suburb.⁵⁴ Auntie Nell, carrying the family silver in her luggage,⁵⁵ flew up there with him⁵⁶.

Darwin had grown into a defence town with more than 5000 troops, centred on Larrakia Barracks. The McElhones became part of the higher echelon of Darwin society, living in a tropical fibro cottage and enjoying occasions at Government House.⁵⁷

Nell and Joe at their Darwin donga⁵⁸



Group at Government House Darwin, on the investiture of Brigadier E.F. Lind with the CBE.⁵⁹

Front Row: Wiggie Bennett, Tony Walsh, Pat and Streaker Young, Nell and Joe McElhone, Charlotte and Commander Chesterman. Brigadier Lind is in white in centre back row.⁶⁰

Three fateful events quickly changed this somewhat idyllic life: the attack on Pearl Harbour December 7, 1941, the fall of Singapore, February 15, 1942 and only four days later, a ferocious attack on Darwin by 188 Japanese planes. Some time before this it seems Auntie Nell was evacuated on board an American vessel, one of six civilian women who were the last to leave Darwin.⁶¹ Nell was safely back at her mother's flat in Randwick but the McElhones' time together over the next four years would be limited to shore leave, allowing them a few brief visits back to Kempsey.

Of the more than 40 ships sheltering in Darwin Harbour that day a most significant one for Joe was the hospital ship *Manunda*, where, not long after, he would take command for most of the remaining war years.

On the morning of 19 February 1942, Manunda was damaged during the Japanese air raids on Darwin, despite her highly prominent Red Cross markings on a white background. 13 members of the ships' crew and hospital staff were killed, 19 others were seriously wounded and another 40 or so received minor wounds. The Manunda was able to act as a casualty clearing station for injured personnel from other ships involved in the attack. She sailed to Fremantle the next day.

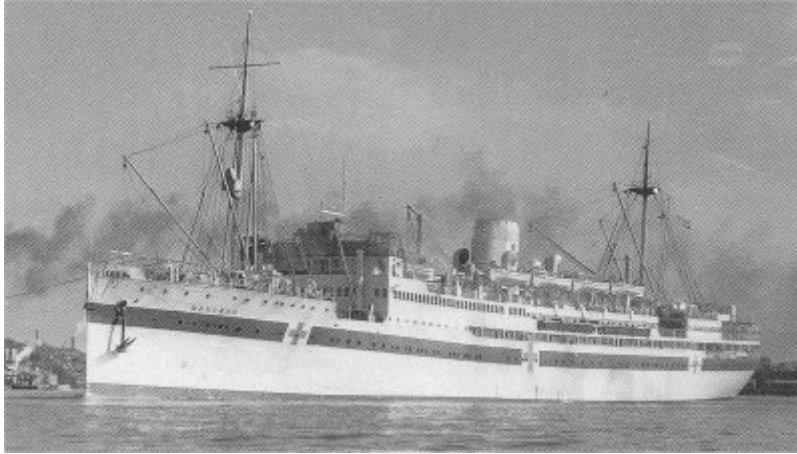
Although it was itself quite significantly damaged⁶², the Darwin military hospital (119 Australian General Hospital, part of Joe's area of responsibility) was also vital in treating survivors.

[The 119 Australian General Hospital staff] cared for hundreds of cases of burns from ships ablaze in the harbour. 'Every ward had wounded in every available bed, and also on the verandahs. ...[They] worked without a break for thirty-six hours'. Aircraft machine-gunned the hospital and one patient, placed under a bed for protection, was killed. ⁶³

Joe was at this time attached to Army Medical Headquarters and his report of the medical situation submitted a week later is preserved in the archives of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.⁶⁴ It covers the 7th Military District (which was all of the Northern Territory) and outlines plans for relocating the Darwin military hospital further south to Adelaide River or Katherine. This presented major problems with very poor roads, no permanent accommodation and not least the constant threat of further bombing. As this 1200 bed military hospital was set up,⁶⁵ in April 1942, Joe took up duties there.⁶⁶

MANUNDA

On the move again, in August, Joe was transferred from Adelaide River⁶⁷ to the hospital ship *Manunda*⁶⁸.



*Manunda showing red crosses on sides*⁶⁹

After its bomb damage had been repaired in Adelaide, the *Manunda* was back at sea with Joe on board and on September 6 she steamed north, to the war zone on the eastern tip of Papua New Guinea. There she moored in the harbour awaiting sick and wounded. Hostilities -- now known as the Battle of Milne Bay -- were raging on land, sea and air. The question was: should the hospital ship keep all its lights on or be blacked out? It was decided to leave all lights on.⁷⁰ Joe loved to tell the story⁷¹ of how on three consecutive nights two Japanese warships appeared right in the harbour, raked her with their searchlights,⁷² but allowed her to remain unharmed. To the Aussies' relief, her status as a hospital ship was respected.

Joe formally took command of *Manunda* in November 1942⁷³. This meant that he was not only the senior medical officer but also the officer commanding troops, and he administered the unit as an army general hospital of from 300 to 600 beds.^{74 75} The *Manunda* was his charge for the next three years. "She made a total of 27 voyages from Milne Bay to Brisbane and Sydney transporting wounded troops. As the war continued, she was relocated as required and she followed the Allied forces to the various islands around the Pacific."⁷⁶

A later historian explains her significance:⁷⁷

The Manunda became a symbol of hope for Australian troops as they fought along the New Guinea coast. She was standing off shore when the last of the Japanese died at Buna and Gona in 1943. She was there ferrying medical units and nursing personnel to set up bases in New Guinea. When the famous 9th Division made its amphibious assault on Lae in 1944 there was the Manunda anchored off the landing beaches ready to receive the casualties. Then it was on to Finschhafen and Madang. The sight of the white painted ship with the red crosses became a familiar sight to so many Australians in this grim period.

Things could have worked out very differently for Joe and the *Manunda*. On 14th May 1943 her sister ship *Centaur* on her first full-duty trip was torpedoed off the Queensland coast.⁷⁸

The Centaur was properly marked, and brightly illuminated, showing navigation lights, red crosses on the hull and on each side of the funnel, with white lights along a green band on the hull. There was a loud explosion, flames enveloped the forward part of the bridge, and the ship lurched to port and sank in two to three minutes.

Nearly 300 Australians died. Authorities lost confidence in the power of the Geneva Convention to prevent Japanese attacks on hospital ships and ordered the *Manunda* to port to be refloated as a regular naval vessel. Her red crosses were painted out. But, after a fierce debate about the law of the sea and her rights to protection, there was another change of heart and by August Joe was once more on the high seas back to New Guinea waters.⁷⁹



Map of South West Pacific showing Morotai to the NW

MOROTAI

By 1944, yet another challenge lay ahead. As the use of planes for evacuating wounded increased, the need for hospital ships lessened⁸⁰. The final offensive against Japan was imminent. Plans were made for a major air assault and landing bases through the islands north of New Guinea were being set up.

A big hospital unit was needed to make provision for the wounded in this campaign. The site selected was Morotai, an island more or less half way between the western tip of Papua and the southern tip of the Philippines, formerly under Netherlands rule, nowadays part of the Moluccas, Indonesia. On 30 June 1944 JB formally relinquished command of the *Manunda*⁸¹ and was appointed to Morotai to command the 113 Australian Convalescent Depot, a kind of half way house preparing soldiers to return to their units after recovery in hospital. It was a unit within the much larger 2/5 Australia General Hospital⁸².

In mid-April after months of preparation, Joe went north as part of a big team on the USS *Sea Ray* to set it up, disembarking at Morotai on April 22, 1945⁸³.



Morotai. 27 May 1945. Lieutenant Colonel J B McElhone, Commanding Officer

113 Convalescent Depot ⁸⁴

The history of this Hospital ⁸⁵ during this period gives a fascinating insight into the last days of the Pacific war. In April 1945, when the 2/5 AGH arrived at the island of Morotai, the island was still partly occupied by the Japanese. Advance parties cleared the scrub and made makeshift provision for fresh water supplies. A party of 41 officers and 274 other ranks had landed on 5 April, all stores were unloaded by 10 April and within four days, four wards were fully equipped and ready for patients, with dispensary, Q stores and operating theatre prepared. On 18 April 1945, 242 nursing sisters and AAMWS (Australian Army Medical Women's Service) arrived.

Joe got there on April 22. By Anzac Day, there were 589 beds equipped with 386 occupied. The dysentery ward had 60 beds and the skin ward had

180. On 10 May the bed state was 1116 and by June it was 1500. In July there were about 100 Japanese prisoners of war among the patients. Malaria was still rampant, but fortunately, scrub typhus was no longer a problem.



Joe McElhone centre, at an unknown jungle posting⁸⁶

August 15, 1945, four months later, saw the end of the war following the surrender of Japan. Joe was there to witness a number of surrender ceremonies for example when 660 Japanese troops on Morotai capitulated to Allied forces. This was followed by the return of 68 of the Australian POWs released by the Japanese, possibly from Ambon. "The condition of these men after so much brutality by their barbaric captors brought tears to the eyes of the staff".^{87 88 89 90}

On September 9, JB was there when Australian General Thomas Blamey accepted the surrender of the Japanese Second Army at a ceremony held on the I Corps' sports ground at Morotai. The following day, when he flew out of Morotai⁹¹, there were still over 800 patients in the hospital, more than 600 of whom were discharged in the next few weeks.⁹²

BACK HOME

This time Joe returned home on compassionate leave. His own health was now at risk: he was medically retired from the Army only a month later with “myocarditis, vascular degeneration and arteritis (sic)”⁹³. He was declared 60% disabled. He had served overseas for 1110 days⁹⁴. A year in Darwin, two years on the *Manunda* and four months on Morotai — years of constant heat and responsibility, not to mention his own heavy smoking — had taken their toll.

However he was back in Kempsey only days after arriving home, picking up the threads of life there ⁹⁵ and resuming his medical practice. He even made plans to do a course in anaesthetics as part of the post-war reconstruction education program for ex-soldiers⁹⁶. Over the next year in Kempsey he took up the cudgels to argue for a better public hospital, in particular for new nurses’ quarters and a new X-ray machine.⁹⁷ But then his health took a turn for the worse and in August 1946 he was admitted to St. Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, in a serious condition.⁹⁸ It soon became necessary to hand over the family home and his practice to the incoming medico, Dr Quinn.⁹⁹

With Joe so ill, he and Nell moved to Sydney and lived with her sister, my Auntie Josie Oxenham and her family at Centennial Park. My cousin Alan remembers Easter Show time—the old Showground was just up the road and Alan was 10. Uncle Joe, too sick to go out, would slip him a pound note every day: “Here! Come home and tell me what rides you went on!”

A few months before his death¹⁰⁰ Joe was awarded the military honour of a "Mention in despatches", recognition of his outstanding service in the South-Pacific West area.



In August, 1947¹⁰¹, feeling well enough for the plane trip to Grafton, Joe decided to make a final trip back to Kempsey where he and Nell stayed once more in their old home with its new occupants. They flew to Kempsey to see all their old friends and then had a day at the races at Grafton. "He knew then that his days on earth were limited and his chats and handshakes and repartee were his way of saying good-bye."¹⁰²

After an illness of over a year, Uncle Joe died of lung cancer on October 21 1947 at St Vincent's Hospital, Darlinghurst, and was buried from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church Randwick, beside his parents in Rookwood Cemetery¹⁰³. "JB" had won universal affection and respect. His obituary in the Kempsey paper says it all¹⁰⁴:

**Vale Dr McElhone
Passing of Ex-Mayor
Loved man of the Services**

A fine respected and highly esteemed identity in Lieut. Colonel (Dr.) Joseph Benedict McElhone M.B. Ch. M. passed away in a private hospital, Darlinghurst, on last Tuesday night.

Dr McElhone was well-known to the Kempsey and Macleay people for his pleasing personality and highly esteemed character was visited on them almost continuously for almost 25 years. A charitable man, a friend to the needy, a man who disposed of his medical knowledge to all classes of people, irrespective of creed, circumstances or color he had only friends on the Macleay and the news of his passing will be learned with regret by all.

It is but a few months since the doctor visited his friends on the district, and it was during period that he lost a life-long friend the late Mr W.H Sheridan and just prior to that the late P.J. O'Neill. The doctor's visit to his friends was an example of his outstanding courage and appreciation of friendship. He knew then that his days on this earth were limited and his chats and handshakes, and repartee, was his way of saying farewell. With a smile on his lips and a cheery word he told many of his acquaintances that he would not be seeing them again.

From the Macleay, he went on to Grafton for the Jockey Club's meeting, a regular outing for him, and there too met and farewelled many whom he knew.

A devout Catholic, he was always to the fore for his church.

"J.B." as he was commonly known served in two wars. In the first he was abroad as medical corporal and, on his return, completed the studies which enabled him to come to Kempsey early in 1920. His first surgery was near where McNeil's photography studios are today. After opening his practice in the town, he went to Sydney to marry Miss Helen Ita Dwyer at Randwick on June 8, 1920.

The happy couple returned to settle in the town which was to know them so well. The doctor quickly settled to the activities of the town, both in the sporting and civil life. He was educated at St Joseph's College Sydney and represented at Rugby Union. He also won one of the amateur University boxing titles. Little wonder he became prominent in Kempsey sporting circles, and his ability as a Rugby full-back is still remembered by enthusiasts.

Boxing and football were not the least of "J.B.'s" sporting interests; he became a notable member of the Rifle Club, and took a major interest in the doings of the turf. He owned several gallopers, and nothing pleased him more than to see his colours carried to scale.

His racing interests did not centre on the North Coast alone, for he was a frequent visitor to the big carnivals in the cities, where he became known to the A.J.C. and Tattersall clubs fraternity. In those days his horses were kept in stables at the Greenhill hotel where Mr Ted McPhillips was the licensee.

Dr. McElhone's place in civic affairs brought to the town a lasting memorial to his name. With the assistance of his old friend, the late Mr Harry Chapple, he was instrumental in bringing the present baths and Belgrave Street Park to the people; and many will recall his titanic struggles against opposition to these public utilities. He was Mayor of Kempsey for one term and an alderman for several years. It was "J.B." who was one of the instigators in Kempsey having its own aerodrome, for he was behind the move which eventually clinched the deal for the property where Aldavilla aerodrome now stands.

The doctor's interest for the people continued through the years, even to giving to the poor his best medical aid, without thought of remuneration. In fact, as is well-known to many, he frequently refused to take payment for his services from the poor and often chose to give to them in their distress.

There were many organisations which had his backing and help, frequently without the public presence of his name. Just prior to the last war he felt that he could do his country a greater service and he stood as an independent candidate for the Cowper seat in the Federal election. He was a member of the initial Chamber of Commerce.

Then came the war, and donning the uniform he served with distinction. Holding the rank of Lieut-Colonel, he was A.D.M.S. Darwin, prior to taking charge of the hospital ship Manunda, during its many dangerous journeys of mercy. He was on the boat when the Japanese warships entered Milne Bay and shelled the shore installation and he often told the story how the enemy after shining search lights on the Manunda, allowed it to remain unharmed.

At the completion of his service he returned to Kempsey to take back the practice carried on for him by Dr Tom Tighe and he soon became established again in the place of respect formerly enjoyed. Not so many months ago, his health began to fail and it was with regret that he handed over "Musetta", his home and practice to two young army doctors, Drs. McNeill and Quinn. He kept close contact with the main district of his life but his visits were too few and far between for those of his friends who little knew of the seriousness of his illness.

Aged 53, he was the son of the late Mr. and Mrs. McElhone, a well-known Sydney family. He is survived by his wife, two brothers, Andrew, who was formerly Mayor of Moree, and Jack, who holds a Government position in Sydney and three sisters Belle, Millicent and Kath.

Endnotes

¹ *SMH* 4 Aug 1944 page 10

² WWI Army Record

³ *Catholic Press* 14 Jan 1937 page 18

⁴ Detail from Mary Makinson

⁵ Information from St Joseph's College Archives, supplied by Mr Jim Gray, personal communication, 19.8.2014

⁶ <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/scripts/Imagine.asp?B=1942760>

⁷ State Records NSW, Kingswood Depository, Series 9873 Item R3911 photos of doctors

⁸ Australian Imperial Force Embarkation Roll includes JB McElhone who embarked at Sydney per *Orsova* 14 July 1915.

⁹ *Queensland Times*, Wednesday 5 May 1915, page 5

¹⁰ No 1 Australian Hospital Ship A63 *Karoola*, docked at Alexandria.

<http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/A02861/>

¹¹ There is further information on *Karoola* in the Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Vol IX The Royal Australian Navy (plate page 428; pages 426,495, 538, 480, 489-90) and in Vol 1 of The Official History of the Australian Medical Services. Both books are digitally available on the Australian War Memorial website http://www.awm.gov.au/histories/first_world_war/.

¹² *Queensland Times* 11 Dec 1915 page 3

A sailor on board told the story:

"We were on our way from Gibraltar to London," he said, "and had been out about two days, when the wireless operator received the S.O.S. signal. Col. Craig held a consultation with the commander, and it was decided to go to the assistance of the ship in distress. When we got to the scene, we found that it was the Highland Warrior... The ship was piled up on the rocks, and just as we got there they put out six boats in a very heavy sea. The boats contained all the women and children who were on board. We found it impossible to lower a gangway, owing to the big waves, so we hit upon an ingenious plan for getting the castaways on board. We lowered a derrick from the ship's side, with a coal basket attached to the rope. The basket was swung out about 50ft. and then two women or a woman and a child, were fixed in the basket, and hauled on deck. The work took two hours. But we had the satisfaction of saving 35 women and children!"

¹³ As seen in the ABC TV series *Anzac Girls*

¹⁴ Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Volume IX – The Royal Australian Navy, 1914-1918 (9th edition, 1941), **Appendix 6 – Merchant Ships Employed in Government War-Service** (pages 479-80) <http://static.awm.gov.au/images/collection/pdf/RCDIG1069756--1-.PDF>

¹⁵ *Evening News* Monday 6 Dec 1915 page 6; Photo Mirror of Australia 11 Dec 1915

¹⁶ <http://static.awm.gov.au/images/collection/pdf/RCDIG1069756--1-.PDF>

¹⁷ Army record WWI

¹⁸ Sydney Uni Archives; <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/scripts/Imagine.aspx?record=1942760> my file medical year final

¹⁹ http://static.awm.gov.au/images/collection/items/ACCNUM_LARGE/RCDIG1067596/RCDIG1067596--60-.JPG

²⁰ http://www0.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2007/pdf/influenza_report_full_6-35.pdf <http://sydney.edu.au/medicine/people/alumni/viewuserdetail.php?id=15281>

http://www0.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2007/pdf/influenza_report_full_6-35.pdf

²¹ Official History of the Australian Medical Services, page 384

<http://static.awm.gov.au/images/collection/pdf/RCDIG1070004--1-.PDF>

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/Resources/Divisions/Academic/Library/Cultural%20Collections/pdf/JenniferGreenwell_1980.pdf

²² Personal information from Helen Malloy

²³ University of Sydney Medical School "Influenza Epidemic of 1919"

<http://sydney.edu.au/medicine/museum/mwmuseum/index.php/InfluenzaEpidemicof1919>

²⁴ State Records New South Wales [NRS4481 St6674]

²⁵ *Freeman's Journal* Thursday 30 October 1919, page 28, 29

²⁶ Photographs held by Macleay River Historical Society

²⁷ May 1920 JB was in Kempsey, member of Catholic Debating Society

²⁸ Information from Macleay River Historical Society Photographic file

²⁹ *Freemans Journal* 24 June 1920 page 20

³⁰ *Northern Star* 20 October 1925

³¹ *Port Macquarie News* 20 September 1924.

³² Probate papers, State Records Kingswood

³³ Photo supplied from Josie Oxenham's scrapbook by Alan Oxenham

³⁴ *Macleay Argus* Obituary

³⁵ War record page 1

³⁶ James Gray, "SJC's first Indigenous student" in Saint Joseph's College [Hunter's Hill] News, Term 3, 2008, page 12. Robert St John (1866-1930) was the first St Joseph's indigenous student.

³⁷ Detail from Jan Oxenham

³⁸ Personal information 12.9.2014

³⁹ Personal information from Macleay District Historical Society

⁴⁰ Photo supplied to Macleay River Historical Society by current owner Mr B Pusey of Valentine, NSW, emailed to MP 7.7.14

⁴¹ Thank you to Ruth Lynch for this memory!

⁴² War record 1.11.39 Lieutenant promoted to Captain

⁴³ War Record, page 9, 18.9.40 promoted to Major

⁴⁴ War Record 22.2.41 Assistant Director of Medical Services Darwin

⁴⁵ *Richmond River Herald* 13 September 1940

⁴⁶ *Port Macquarie News* 11 February 1942

⁴⁷ Australian federal election, 1940: Cowper

⁴⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald* Monday 8 June 1942, page 4

⁴⁹ 2.12.40. Transferred to Military Hospital Hay so he was at Hay for 3 months till 28.2.41

⁵⁰ Internees at Hay 7. 9. 1940 to 20. 5. 1941 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMT_Dunera

⁵² *Inside History* Blog , November 2013

<http://www.insidehistory.com.au/2013/11/the-conductor-and-the-premier-a-family-history-by-mark-tedeschi/>

⁵³ 28.2.41 emplaned for Darwin War Record

⁵⁴ IN HONOURED MEMORY OF 119 AUSTRALIAN GENERAL HOSPITAL/ BAGOT BERRIMAH ADELAIDE RIVER/ 22ND APRIL 1941 TO 14TH MAY 1943.

⁵⁵ Detail supplied by Ruth Lynch

⁵⁶ 20 March 1942 *Richmond River Herald* `

⁵⁷ See photo C.L.A. Abbott, *Australia's Frontier Province*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1950, page 44

⁵⁸ Personal photo

⁵⁹ Lind received the CBE award in King's Honours 11 July 1940, date of investiture not known.

⁶⁰ Personal photo, with names Nell has written on the back. Information on the occasion from Abbott page 71.

⁶¹ 20 March 1942 *Richmond River Herald*

⁶² Goodman page 73

⁶³ Ruth Rae, 'White, Edith Alexandra (1901-1988)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/white-edith-alexandra-15807/text27006>, accessed 2 February 2014.

⁶⁴ [Darwin - Reports:] Darwin - Inspection Report No 12, 7MD and Central Australia L of C [Line of Communication] Medical Appreciation 7MD by Lt Col McElhone, 23 Feb 1942, Summary of report on Visit to Darwin and its L of C by Lt Col Galbraith, 28 Feb - 9 Mar 1942 AWM54 [625/7/11](#)

⁶⁵ http://www.exploroz.com/Forum/Topic/88593/Sunday_History_Photo__NT.aspx

⁶⁶ War record page 10

⁶⁷ War record page 8

⁶⁸ War record page 8 says he embarked from Melbourne per 2/1 Hospital ship Manunda 17.8.42

⁶⁹ Original Page: <http://www.ozatwar.com/ran/manunda.htm>

⁷⁰ Goodman page 74

⁷¹ Obituary, *Macleay Argus*, October 1947

⁷² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manunda>; Goodman page 73-75

⁷³ War record

⁷⁴ <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/records/awmohww2/medical/vol4/part4/awmohww2-medical-vol4-part4-ch38.pdf><http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manunda> page 497 or 13/24

⁷⁵ For a detailed description of such a hospital ship see Walker, Allan Seymour *Australia in the War of 1939–1945. Series 5 – Medical: Volume IV – Medical Services of the Royal Australian Navy and Royal Australian Air Force with a section on women in the Army Medical Services* (1st edition, 1961) pages 492ff

<http://static.awm.gov.au/images/collection/pdf/RCDIG1070408--1-.PDF>

⁷⁶ *Manunda* Wikipedia

⁷⁷ Goodman page 76

⁷⁸ Walker op.cit page 501-2

⁷⁹ Goodman page 75

⁸⁰ Walker op cit page 502-3

⁸¹ War record page 8

⁸² War record page 8

⁸³ War record page 8

⁸⁴ Australian War Memorial <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/109331/>

⁸⁵ <http://2-5agh.org/Our%20History.htm>

⁸⁶ Personal photo

⁸⁷ <http://2-5agh.org/Our%20History.htm#Association>

⁸⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Morotai

⁹⁰ <http://www.ww2australia.gov.au/vevp/home.html>

⁹¹ War service record National Archives item 4890682 page 5 and 11

⁹² Statistics - Final report 2/5 Australian General Hospital; Morotai

⁹³ War record page 8

⁹⁴ War record page 5

⁹⁵ *Port Macquarie News* 22 Sep 1945

⁹⁶ Probate papers State Records

⁹⁷ *Port Macquarie News* 29 March 1946

⁹⁸ *Port Macquarie News* 30 Aug 1946

⁹⁹ Obituary Vale....

¹⁰⁰ 21 Mar 1947 Dr. J. B. McElhone, of 'Kempsey, was among those included in the latest Army list of awards— Mentioned in Despatches.

¹⁰¹ *Port Macquarie News* 8 Aug 1947

¹⁰² *Macleay Argus*, October 24 1947

¹⁰³ Rookwood Necropolis Section M Grave M175 <http://search.catholiccemeteries.org.au/default.aspx>

¹⁰⁴ *Macleay Argus*, October 24 1947