

Lt. Col. ROBERT JOHN ALLWRIGHT MASSIE DSO & bar
Croix de Guerre avec palme

“JACK” MASSIE

THE UNIVERSITY’S BEST ATHLETE?

More Blues than any other athlete – Athletics – Boat – Cricket – Rugby plus Boxing (by today’s qualifications).

Height – 6’4” or 193cm.
Weight – 15 stone or 95kg.

Born the son of an Australian cricket captain on 8th July, 1890 in Merilbah House, now incorporated into Shore School as Robson House.

Died 14th February, 1966 age 75 and a half years.

Schooling: Shore School. 1900 – 1909.

School Captain 1909, cricket, rugby and boat captain, rifle & athletics champion, actor, selected in NSW rowing eight and threw a cricket ball a record 110m.

University: St. Paul’s College. 1910 – 1913.

Dux of Civil Engineering. 1st Class Honours. University Medal. Graduated March, 1914.

Represented NSW in rugby, athletics winning the Dunn Shield and cricket winning the Sheffield Shield. Rowed for University in preference to NSW.

In 1912–13 Sheffield Shield he took 59 wickets in 10 matches and 1913–14, 39 wickets in 5 matches. In first class cricket he took 99 wickets in 16 matches. For University he won two premierships and no University 1st Grade bowler has had a better season than his 1913-14 season of 69 wickets in 10 matches.

No Tests were played in those two seasons but Jack was selected to tour South Africa with the Australian team in 1914-15. He withdrew (career) but World War I intervened anyway.

In August 1913 he had been selected to tour NZ with the Australian rugby team but also withdrew (studies), thus having the unique distinction of being selected to tour by both the Australian rugby and cricket teams and declining both times. Throughout his sporting life Jack chose studies, career, University & country at war over personal glory.

In May 1913, Jack won the NSW amateur heavyweight boxing title and in 1914 he won the NSW 120 yards hurdles championship.

I'm not sure if he played chess!!

World War I: Enlisted August 1914, sailed October 1914 to Egypt and ultimately on 25th April 1915 landed at Gallipoli.

Jack was wounded three times, returning twice from the field hospital to continue fighting. The third wound in August 1915 was severe and listed as dangerously ill he spent 3 months in a London hospital and several more months back in Australia.

By late 1916 he had returned to France and the war, but in February 1918 he received a severe wound to his foot which ended his war and his sporting days.

He left the army as a Lieutenant Colonel, DSO and bar, Croix de Guerre avec palme, three times mentioned in despatches and from all accounts an extremely popular leader.

Career: After the war Jack renewed his position with the British American Tobacco Company and ultimately became a Director and Australasian Chairman of Directors.

During this time he was Esquire Bedell to the University's Chancellor from 1919 to 1946 and held Government positions from Director of Supply and Development to Chairman of the Ministry of Munitions.

Family: In 1919 he married Phyllis Lang, had a son John and two daughters Diana and Annette. Tragically in 1943 John was killed as a pilot in World War II and Phyllis died the same year. In 1947 Jack married Betty Squire whose daughter Rosemary was best friends with Annette at school. Jack & Betty lived out their lives happily at "Elanora Cottage" Narrabeen.

Personality: Throughout the records of "Jack" Massie, frequent references were made of his smile and his extreme popularity and perhaps surprisingly, his gentle nature.

Mac Chambers

Grateful thanks for information & items supplied by Rosemary Spittle (stepdaughter); Pamela Massie-Greene (nephew's wife), Roger John Massie Dunlop (nephew) and James Rodgers/Max Bonnell (SUCC historians).