

Summer of Renown



Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company

Lieutenant Colonel Eric CAMPBELL, DSO, VD

(1893-1970)

Eric Campbell was born at Young, NSW, on 11 April 1893, the son of Allan Campbell, BA, a prosperous solicitor and landholder. He was educated privately and became an enthusiastic cadet-member of the Australian Commonwealth Coronation Contingent that visited England in 1911 for the coronation of King George V.

In 1914, he was commissioned in the Australian Field Artillery and on 1 April 1916 he joined the AIF. He sailed with 27th Battery, 7th Australian Field Artillery (AFA) Brigade, 3rd Australian Division and served in their campaigns of 1917 including Menin Road, Broodseinde and Passchendaele. In mid-1917, he was transferred to 26th Battery and six weeks later was appointed battery commander of the 46th Battery, 12th (Army) FA Brigade and promoted to major. The battery helped stem the German onslaught of March 1918 north of the Ancre and, as part of the Australia Corps, was engaged in all the subsequent battles until wars end.

He was gassed twice. On the first occasion he was hospitalized for 3 months and on the second he remained on duty. He was awarded the DSO 'for gallant leadership in battle and effective handling of a battery during operations' from 1 April onwards, especially when his battery was under shellfire 14-16 April 1918 where 'his keen efficiency and total disregard of danger were the finest example to the troops concerned. He materially helped by energetic personal observation and organization to have this shelling considerably reduced. [He] is at all time a thoroughly reliable leader, skillful and determined'. He was also twice Mentioned in Dispatches. After the war he soldiered on in the Militia and in 1924 he commanded the 9th Field Artillery Brigade. In 1925 he was promoted to lieutenant colonel and in 1932 he was transferred to the Reserve.

Meanwhile, he had become a solicitor and joined his father in the firm Campbell and Campbell and extended this interest to business, becoming a director of Lithgow Brewery, Cornhill Insurance Co. and Australian National Airways Ltd. He moved to Sydney and lived at 'Boongala', Kuringai Avenue, Turramurra. His interests included motoring and golf and he belonged to the Union Club, Royal Sydney and Killara Golf Clubs, and the Masonic Society.

On 16 February 1931, Campbell formed the New Guard at a meeting at the Imperial Services Club after the Communist Party formed numerous 'mass movements'. After Jack Lang became premier, the New Guard's manifesto was promulgated and recruiting began. Membership reached about 120 000 (30 000 in metropolitan Sydney) but Campbell kept a very low profile, even though it 'was known that Campbell was planning an insurrection'. The crisis point came when the Premier (Jack Lang) was sacked in 1932 on constitutional grounds by the Governor, Sir Philip Game. After Lang's defeat at the elections following his

dismissal, the New Guard lost its political relevance and Eric Campbell dropped out of the public eye.

In 1941, he returned to the Young area where he continued his practice. He was president of Burrangong Shire Council in 1949-50, and bought a property near Yass where he settled in 1957. In 1966, he moved to Canberra where he practised, but his health was increasingly impaired by serious injuries received in an accident in 1959. He died in Canberra in 1970.

Source: R. Darlington, *Eric Campbell and the New Guard*, Kangaroo Press, 1983, and NAA.