



Major John Bright Birch

(Military Cross)



Played with Adelaide University



Football Club: B Grade (1913)

MB BS (1915), FRCSE

Background

Coinciding with the Centenary of Anzacs our incentive behind the series of biographical publications is the Adelaide University Football and Cricket Club's desire to honour our players who served in the Great War (1914 - 1918). These brave men put on hold their academic, professional and sporting careers for King and Country in the name of peace and freedom. The AUFC/AUCC WW1 Memorial Committee is endeavouring to identify every one of our players who served and prepare life stories on all. This is to ensure their sacrifices and further contributions to society will be recognised by future generations.

On Anzac Day 2015, the Centenary of the Gallipoli landing, a memorial plaque was unveiled on the Adelaide University Oval Pavilion and this was followed by the erection of a picket fence between the pavilion and the scoreboard with each picket bearing a plaque with the name of an AUFC/AUCC player who served.

The following documentation relates to the life of John Bright Birch. It is compilation of information and photographs collected from a variety of historical sources.

The AIF Project

<https://www.aif.adfa.edu.au/showPerson?pid=22928>



John Bright BIRCH

Place of birth	Glenelg, South Australia
Religion	Church of England
Occupation	Medical practitioner
Address	Eastwood, South Australia
Marital status	Single
Age at embarkation	25
Next of kin	Father, J W Birch, Park Terrace, Eastwood, South Australia
Enlistment date	1 December 1915
Rank on enlistment	Captain
Unit name	Medical Officers
Embarkation details	Unit embarked from Sydney, New South Wales, on board RMS <i>Osterley</i> on 15 January 1916
Rank from Nominal Roll	Major
Unit from Nominal Roll	Australian Army Medical Corps
Recommendations (Medals and Awards)	Military Cross
Medals	Recommendation date: 10 October 1916 Military Cross
Other details	Source: 'Commonwealth Gazette' No. 103 Date: 29 June 1917 Medals: Military Cross, 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal

Service Record

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=3084044>

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE

ATTESTATION PAPER OF PERSONS ENLISTED FOR SERVICE ABROAD.

No. *1000* Name *BIRCH John Bright* Unit *A.M.C. 1st (Kangaroo)* Medical Officer *29th Sep. 1915.*

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

1. What is your Name? ... *John Bright Birch*

2. In or near what Parish or Town were you born? ... near the Town of *Glenelg* in the County of *South Australia*

3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown.) ... *Natural born*

4. What is your age? ... *25*

5. What is your trade or calling? ... *Medical Practitioner*

6. Are you, or have you been an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period? ... *no*

7. Are you married? ... *no*

8. Who is your next of kin? (Address to be stated) ... *John William Birch Park Terrace Eastwood*

9. Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? ... *no*

10. Have you ever been discharged from any part of His Majesty's Forces with Ignominy, or as Incurable and Worthless, or on account of Conviction of Felony, or of a Sentence of Penal Servitude, or have you been dismissed with Disgrace from the Navy? ... *no*

11. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge ... *no*

12. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service? ... *yes*

13. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? ... *no*

14. (For married men and widowers with children)—Do you understand that no Separation Allowance will be issued to you either before or after embarkation during your term of service? ...

John Bright Birch do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

And I further agree to allot not less than two-fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my wife and children.*

Date *29. 9. 15* *J.B. Birch capt.* Signature of person enlisted.

* This clause should be struck out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 18 years of age.

RSL Virtual War Memorial

<https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/318553>

BIRCH, John Bright

Service Numbers: Not yet discovered

Enlisted: 1 December 1915

Last Rank: Captain

Last Unit: Medical Officers

Born: Glenelg. SA, 1 December 1890

Home Town: Adelaide, Adelaide, South Australia

Schooling: Private tuition, University of Adelaide

Occupation: Medical Practitioner

Died: 1975, cause of death not yet discovered, place of death not yet discovered

Cemetery: St Jude's Brighton Cemetery, South Australia

Memorials: University of Adelaide WW1 Honour Roll Mitchell Bldg*

World War 1 Service

1 Dec 1915: Enlisted AIF WW1, Captain, Australian Army Medical Corps (AMF)

22 Dec 1915: Involvement Captain, Medical Officers

22 Dec 1915: Embarked Captain, Medical Officers, HMAT Kanowna, Sydney

Biography

"Blood, Sweat and Fears" ISBN: 978-0-64692-750-3 Medical Practitioners and Medical Students of South Australia who served in WW1

BIRCH John Bright

MC MB BS FRCS(Ed)

1890 - 1975



John Bright Birch was born on the 1st December 1890 at Glenelg, South Australia, the son of John William Birch. He was educated by private tuition at Semaphore, South Australia. He studied medicine at the University of Adelaide where he graduated in 1915.

Birch enlisted in the AIF and was commissioned in September 1915. He was single, 25 years old, 5ft 9ins tall weighed 150lbs, medium complexion, blue eyes and brown hair. His father of Park Terrace, Eastwood South Australia was named next of kin. He embarked for the Middle East in December for General Duties. He was assigned to 4 FdAmb on arrival, only to be reassigned to 12 FdAmb two weeks later. He went to France with the unit in June 1916, and 29th December 1916 was awarded the Military Cross for *conspicuous service rendered* at Pozières between July and September when the FdAmb was heavily engaged. He was ill whilst on leave in December in England, and on his return to France in January was kept at 1 AGH for two months before he was allowed to rejoin 12 Fd Amb. He had a brief detachment to 46 Bn during May 1917, and from August to December served as RMO of 51 Bn. He was posted to 3AGH at Abbeville in February 1918, and in September 1918 he was promoted to Major and sent to the POW cage as MO for a month. After the Armistice he was transferred to 14 FdAmb until March 1919. He was granted study leave for six months and completed a residency at the Queen's Hospital, Birmingham. He was repatriated in November 1919 with his appointment terminated

on the 7th March 1920. He was issued with the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Birch entered general practice in South Australia on his return. He worked at various locations including Unley and Renmark. During World War I, the corner of Urrbrae Ave and Ferguson Ave, Myrtle Bank became a Repatriation Hospital for tuberculosis and although much of the property has been subdivided the house and its garden remain as part of the War Veterans' Home. The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester were met by Dr. J. Birch during a visit to the Hospital in May 1927. He was at 99 Fullerton Rd, Unley by 1932. He was Commanding Officer of 3 FdAmb at Keswick in 1932-33. In 1933 he decided to specialize in surgery, and went to Scotland to obtain his surgical fellowship. On his return to Australia he worked first at Richmond NSW, and then settled at Tweed Heads where he also became the GMO. During WW2 he moved to Sydney. He later returned to South Australia. John Bright Birch died in Adelaide in 1975.

Sources:

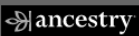
<http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/scripts/Imagine.asp?B=3084044>.
NLA
The Register Adelaide 19 Dec 1910
The Register Adelaide 15 Oct 1915
Likeman R, From the Tropics to the Desert, Slouch Hat Publications 2012.
Photo AWM, E02567

Biography

Early Life

John Bright Birch was born on 1 December 1890, the son of John William Birch and Kate McIntyre (SA Birth Registration 470/212). He had a sister and four brothers.

John William Birch



BIRTH C 1859

DEATH 16 SEPTEMBER 1940 • Leicester Street Parkside South Australia

1859
(AGE)


Birth

c 1859

1881
22

Marriage

7 Sept 1881 • South Australia

 Catherine Kate McIntyre

1940
81


Death


16 September 1940 • Leicester Street Parkside South Australia

1 Source

Family


Biological Parents


 **Thomas Birch**


 **Unknown Mother**


Additional Parent Relationships ▾


Spouse & Children


 **Catherine Kate McIntyre**


 **William Henry Birch**
1882–

 **Kate Millicent Birch**
1884–1969

 **Malcolm McIntyre Birch**
1886–1908

 **Clyde McIntyre Birch**
1888–1959

 **John Bright Birch**
1890–

 **Hugh McIntyre Birch**
1895–1976

Schooling

John studied by private tuition and passed his Senior Examinations in December 1909 and Special Senior Examinations in March 1910 followed by Special Examinations for those intending to study medicine in March 1911.

University

John commenced his studies at Adelaide University in 1911 and graduated MB BS in 1915.

University Sport

Football

John played football for the newly formed Adelaide University B Grade team (1913) in the Adelaide and Suburban Association.

Rowing

In 1911 John competed for the University in the Henley-on-Torrens regatta, rowing in the Maiden Tubs.

Athletics

John won the 220 yards flat race at the Adelaide University Athletic Club Sports in June 1912.

Lacrosse

In 1915 John played B Grade Lacrosse for the University.

World War I

John enlisted on the 1st December 1915 and his WWI service is well documented in the "*Blood, Sweat and Fears*" biography above.

Military Cross Citation

<small>(D 38 21) W 4707-298 500m 7/16 H W V [E. 195.] Form W. 3121/3</small> "GENERAL LIST" Army Form W. 3121.							
Brigade.		4th Australian		Division.		1st A. & N.Z.A.	
Corps.		10th October 1916.		Date of Recommendation.			
Schedule No. <small>(to be left blank)</small>	Unit	Regt. No.	Rank and Name	Action for which commended	Recommended by	Honour or Reward	(To be left blank)
64103	12th Australian Field Ambulance.		Captain JOHN BRIGHT BIRCH.	For general good work during the operations near POZIERES between 27.7.16. and 15.9.16.	Lieut-Colonel THOMAS GORDON ROSS, O.C. 12th Aus. Fd Amb.	MILITARY CROSS.	✓

Glenelg Guardian (SA : 1914 - 1936) Thu 4 Jan 1917 Page 2

THE MILITARY CROSS.

AWARDED TO A GLENELGITE.

CAPT. JOHN BRIGHT BIRCH.

Glenelg lads have played and are still playing a prominent part in the great war since August 1914. Hundreds have volunteered and gone forth to do battle for King and Country. Many have returned maimed and wrecked in health, and up to date over 50 have made the greatest sacrifice of all—have given their lives.

Several have gained distinctions on the battlefield, and have been mentioned in dispatches, and in other ways have added lustre to the seaside town. The latest to add to the glory of "the boys," is Captain John Bright Birch, of the 12th Australian Field Ambulance, who, according to the cable announcement on Tuesday, has been awarded the Military Cross for service in France. Unfortunately details of the services rendered which gained for the gallant captain such honor are not to hand yet. Captain Birch (who is a brother to our esteemed and respected Ald. Birch) is a native of Glenelg, having been born at the premier watering-place 26 years ago. He is the fourth son of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Birch, who now reside at Parkside. Captain Birch left South Australia on December 17, 1915, and spent some months in Egypt, prior to being transferred to France. On October 17 of last year, Captain Birch received the following:—

"Major-General Sir H. V. Cox, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.S.F., commanding 4th Australian Division, congratulates Captain John Bright Birch, 12th Australian Field Ambulance, on his devotion to duty on the Somme, August-September, 1916."

The "Guardian" congratulates the recipient of such high distinction, also the proud parents and family. Signaller C. M. Birch, who enlisted with the 17th Battalion in N. S.W. is also on active service in France. He is the eldest son.

Career and Family Life

On his return from the War John was appointed a resident medical officer at the Adelaide Hospital. In November 1920 John was locum tenens for Dr LA Hayward at Berri and in 1921 he commenced general practice at Renmark and was appointed honorary medical officer for the Renmark District Hospital and the radiographer at the Hospital. John purchased a Dodge Brothers car in June 1921. While at Renmark John was a Vice-President of the Renmark Rowing Club, honorary surgeon for a boxing match and surgeon for the Renmark Racing Club. His main sport during while at Renmark was golf. John resigned from his roles as Honorary Medical Officer and radiographer at the Renmark Hospital in April 1924 and it was reported he was considering a trip to the United Kingdom. On leaving Renmark John received a presentation from the Oddfellows Lodge.

In July 1924 John commenced practice at 99 Fullarton Road, Fullarton. His mother, Catherine died on 9th March 1925. In April 1925 John was appointed Medical Officer for League of Frontiersmen. John remained involved in military matters and was in charge of the field hygiene section at the Gawler Military Camp in February 1928.

In 1929 John married Edna May Speed. Their son was born on the 30th July 1930.

John also played golf when back in the city and played in the SA branch of the BMA competition in 1929 -1932. In December 1929 he was appointed honorary anaesthetists at Adelaide Hospital. In October 1930 John attended the Field Ambulance Reunion. John was still actively involved in the Army Medical Corps in 1932 when he transferred from the 8th Field Hygiene section to the 3rd Field Ambulance. In addition to golf, John also played Bridge. In late 1932 John left for Great Britain for more than a year returning in January 1934.

By April 1934 John he had commenced a practice at Tweed Heads, NSW. While at Tweed Heads, John and Edna's daughter Margaret was born on the 1st November 1934. In January 1935 John was appointed the Government Medical Officer at Tweed Heads. John continued to play golf and was actively involved in the RSL and a trustee of the Memorial Reserve. In November 1936 he warned the township that their water supply was inadequate and obsolete. John was appointed local medical repatriation officer and war pensions referee for the Coolangatta-Tweed Heads district in September 1937. In February 1938 John took on the role of ship's surgeon on the 'Hieuw Holland' on a two month round trip from Melbourne. His wife joined him for part of the trip.

Shortly after the outbreak of WW2 John and his family moved to Sydney where John had a practice at Crow's Nest. John's father (John William Birch) passed away in September 1940.

In December 1946 the family left for a trip to the UK. In December 1948 John, Edna and Margaret visited friends in Tweed Heads before motoring to Caboolture (Moreton Bay Region of Queensland) where John had purchased a practice.

The 1954 Electoral Roll shows that John (aged 64) was living at Revesby, in the Canterbury-Bankstown area of Sydney, NSW. Both the 1958 and 1963 the Electoral Rolls showed that John had moved to Earlwood, (also in the Canterbury Bankstown area) however by 1968 he had moved to Beecroft in the northern districts of Sydney. By this time John was 78 years of age.

By 1972 John and Edna moved back to Adelaide and were living in the Glenelg area.

Death

John died in 1975 (aged 85) and his wife died in 1983. They are buried at St. Jude's Anglican Cemetery, Brighton. John's younger brother, Dr Hugh Birch was a founding member of the Australasian Association of Psychiatrists (AAP) and President in 1952. He started his psychiatric career in 1926 and retired as Director of Medical Health Parkside Mental Hospital in Adelaide in 1961.

Sources and Acknowledgments

The AIF Project <https://www.aif.adfa.edu.au/>

RSL Virtual War Memorial <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/>

The National Archives of Australia <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/>

Australian War Memorial <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/>

The Adelaide University <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/records/archives/>

The National Library of Australia <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/>

(Trove Newspaper articles tagged – John Bright Birch)

SA Genealogy <https://www.genealogysa.org.au/resources/online-databases.html>

“Blood, Sweat and Fears” ISBN: 978-0-64692-750-3 Medical Practitioners and Medical Students of South Australia who served in WW1

Ancestry.com.au – Family Tree & Electoral Roll Records

Rob O'Shannassy (AUFC/AUCC WW1 Researchers)