



Capt. Hugh William Bell Cairns



Played with Adelaide University



Football Club – A & B Grade (1916)

Degree – MB BS (1917)

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 Hugh William Bell Cairns. It is compilation of information and photographs collected from a variety of historical sources.

AIF Project

<https://www.aif.adfa.edu.au/showPerson?pid=43034>



Hugh William Bell CAIRNS

Regimental number	4501
Place of birth	Port Pirie, South Australia
Religion	Congregational
Occupation	Medical student
Address	Riverton, South Australia
Marital status	Single
Age at embarkation	18
Next of kin	Father, William Cairns, Riverton, South Australia
Enlistment date	11 May 1915
Rank on enlistment	Private
Unit name	No 3 Australian General Hospital
AWM Embarkation Roll number	26/67/1
Embarkation details	Unit embarked from Sydney, New South Wales, on board RMS <i>Mooltan</i> on 15 May 1915
Rank from Nominal Roll	Captain
Unit from Nominal Roll	Australian Army Medical Corps
Fate	Discharged in England 31 May 1920
Discharge date	31 May 1920
Other details	War service: Egypt, Gallipoli, Western Front Returned to Australia, 9 February 1916. Re-embarked from Australia, 9 November 1917; disembarked Suez, Egypt, 12 December 1917. Proceeded to England, 5 January 1918; to France, 29 March 1918. Discharged in England, 31 May 1920. Medals: 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal

AIF Project

Note : There are two Service records for Hugh as he was discharged from his initial service to return to Australia and complete his medical training.

<https://www.aif.adfa.edu.au/showPerson?pid=43033>



Hugh William Bell CAIRNS

Place of birth	Port Pirie, South Australia
Religion	Presbyterian
Occupation	Medical practitioner
Address	Riverton, South Australia
Marital status	Single
Age at embarkation	21
Next of kin	Father, W Cairns, Riverton, South Australia
Enlistment date	7 August 1917
Date of enlistment from Nominal Roll	11 May 1915
Place of enlistment	Sydney, New South Wales
Rank on enlistment	Captain
Unit name	Medical Officers
Embarkation details	Unit embarked from Melbourne, Victoria, on board HMAT A71 <i>Nestor</i> on 28 February 1918
Rank from Nominal Roll	Captain
Unit from Nominal Roll	Australian Army Medical Corps
Fate	Discharged in the United Kingdom 31 May 1920
Discharge date	31 May 1920
Other details	War service: Egypt, Gallipoli, Western Front Returned to Australia, 9 February 1916. Re-embarked from Australia, 9 November 1917; disembarked Suez, Egypt, 12 December 1917. Proceeded to England, 5 January 1918; to France, 29 March 1918. Discharged in England, 31 May 1920. Medals: 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal

Service Record

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=3184971>

Now serving with *H.A.M.C.* As No. *Captain*

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE

Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. *4507* Name *CAIRNS HUGH WILLIAM BELL*
Unit *No 3 General Hospital A.I.F.*
Joined on *11/5/1915*

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

1. What is your Name? *CAIRNS, Hugh William Bell*
2. In or near what Parish or Town were you born? *Port Pirie*
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.) *N.B.*
4. What is your age? *18 yrs 11 months*
5. What is your trade or calling? *Medical Student*
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 Cairns, River View, Port Pirie, South Australia*
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 *11 months 13th A.I.F. still serving*
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? *—*
15. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against smallpox and enteric fever? *Yes*

I, *Hugh William Bell Cairns* 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 of 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 *three-fifths*

Date *11th May 1915* Signature *H. W. B. Cairns*
Signature of person enlisted.

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

original.

Medical Officer

Returned from Aust.
With Genl. R. A. M. C.
Ex. No. 9-1-18

Orig. Reg. No. 4501
Orig. Unit. No. 2 Genl. R. A. M. C.

AUSTRALIAN



MILITARY FORCES.

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. *Capt.* Name *CAIRNS Hugh William Bell*

Unit *A R M C*

Joined on *7. 8. 17*

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestment

1. What is your Name? *Hugh William Bell Cairns*
2. In the Parish of *Port Pirie* in or near the Town of *South Australia* in the County of *Natural Born*
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? *27 1/2*
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) *Father W. William Cairns Riverston South Australia*
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 *3rd AGH. Lemnos 10 months. CMF Light Horse (Riverston) Still serving*
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, widowers with children, and soldiers who are the sole support of Widowed mother) Do you understand that no Separation Allowance will be issued to you in respect of your service beyond an amount which together with pay would reach 8/- per day? *Yes*
15. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against smallpox and enteric fever? *Yes*

I, *Hugh William Bell Cairns*, 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 of 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 *7. 8. 17*

W. B. Cairns

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.
† Two-fifths must be allotted to the wife, and if there are children three-fifths must be allotted.

Published Biographies

The Australian Dictionary of Biography

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cairns-sir-hugh-william-bell-5464/text9283>

by E. T. Williams

Sir Hugh William Bell Cairns (1896-1952), neurosurgeon, was born on 26 June 1896 at Port Pirie, South Australia, son of William Cairns, timber contractor from Scotland, and his Australian-born wife Amy Florence, née Bell. He was educated at Riverton High School and at Adelaide High School, where he was dux and editor of the journal in 1911, and proceeded to the university with an exhibition. On 11 May 1915 he joined the Australian Imperial Force as a private in the Australian Army Medical Corps, and from 30 July served in the 3rd Australian General Hospital on Lemnos. Next February he returned to complete his medical course at the University of Adelaide which he represented at rowing and lacrosse. He graduated M.B., B.S. in 1917 after being Davies Thomas and Everard Scholar, was commissioned as captain on 7 August, and elected to the South Australian Rhodes scholarship. From 29 March 1918 he served in France with the 2nd A.G.H., the 3rd A.G.H., the 47th British Division and the 15th Australian Field Ambulance.

Cairns entered Balliol College, Oxford, in January 1919, rowed as bow in the University Boat Race and was president of the Balliol Boat Club. After six months in the Radcliffe Infirmary as house surgeon, he utilized his Rhodes scholarship to begin his long connexion with the London Hospital, first in the pathology institute, then in the surgical unit, becoming F.R.C.S. in 1921, the year of his marriage to Barbara Forster, youngest of the remarkable daughters of A. L. Smith, master of his Oxford College.

At this stage Cairns's special interest was genito-urinary work. As Hunterian Professor of the Royal College in 1926, he lectured on testicle tumours and the congenital cystic kidney. His work was marked by thoroughness rather than brilliance. He was already utterly dependable. The time was ripe, in his view, for the development of neurosurgery at the London Hospital, and in 1926-27 he took leave with a Rockefeller fellowship to study the new speciality under Harvey Cushing at the Peter Brigham Young Institute, Boston, Massachusetts. Under Cushing's abiding inspiration, he learned the surgical technique, the organisation of a clinic and the system of record collection with which he was to endow generations of his pupils. Returning to England in 1927 he had an assured appointment at the London Hospital but life was not at first financially easy. The young man took some time to make his mark since he insisted on specializing in neurological surgery in a manner which seemed unorthodox. His beds were scattered, theatres not easily made available, and nurses and especially radiologists were untrained in the new kind of surgery which was, moreover, unpopular with anaesthetists. (Sir) Geoffrey Jefferson and Professor N. M. Dott were facing similar obstacles and the three men soon created a new school of British neurological surgery of international stature.

Cairns soon became inordinately busy, his consulting work being carried out in the London Hospital, his operating in West End nursing homes. Another visit to Cushing strengthened his resolve to be an integral part of a medical school freed from the consuming distractions and wealth of a busy metropolitan practice. 'Hugo' Cairns was the vital force in persuading Lord Nuffield, who was stunned by his enthusiastically unyielding energy, to make his farsighted benefaction to Oxford medicine. Cairns had by now an international reputation: when T. E. Lawrence was fatally injured on his motorcycle in May 1935, it was 'Mr Cairns, the brain surgeon' who was immediately called to treat him.

Cairns was the inevitable first tenant of the new Nuffield chair of surgery at Oxford in 1937 and he was elected a professorial fellow of Balliol. He left the London clinic in good hands, characteristically taking copies of his case records, clinical photographs and pathological material with him. He was a pioneer in employing a medical artist in his theatres. Doubts about the adequacy of clinical material were soon dispelled, but eighteen creative months with new wards coming to life were interrupted by war, when

Cairns at once became adviser on head injuries to the Ministry of Health and neurosurgeon to the army, eventually rising to brigadier. A new base hospital for head injuries was established at St Hugh's College where 'The Nutcrackers Suite' became a neurological unit of first importance. Just as Cairns was swift to stress the advantage of air evacuation of battle casualties, so too was he busy in organizing the mobile surgical teams which revolutionized the treatment of wounded in the North African campaigns. Earlier still in the war he had persuaded the army to make crash helmets for dispatch riders compulsory.

Cairns was inevitably active in developing the use and technique of penicillin treatment developed at Oxford by (Lord) Howard Florey, his successor as Rhodes scholar from Adelaide. Having studied the technique of penicillin treatment of pneumococcal meningitis, and tuberculous meningitis with streptomycin, in his last years he became interested in the operation of leucotomy.

He was appointed K.B.E. in 1946. Next year he was elected the first Sims Commonwealth professor appointed by the Royal College and given the honorary M.D. of Adelaide. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the medical research soon to begin in the Australian National University. He travelled widely and in his later years administrative and ambassadorial duties stole time from his clinical work, but he remained to the end first and foremost the 'good doctor'. Every patient became Cairns's personal friend for life. He was always an exacting exemplar, mellowing as he grew older but still fiercely demanding of his pupils as of himself. He played tennis as if his life depended on it; felled or sawed timber at Wytham Woods until his companions were exhausted; snatched holidays at Bamburgh; and listened to music with his own especial raptness. He was the ideal professorial fellow of Balliol, the college he loved; his counsels were all-important.

He faced death stoically when an operation diagnosed cancer. To the end he remained at work, being flown to the pillow of some dying eastern potentate, just as in 1946—a measure of his international repute—he had been flown immediately to attend to the American general, George S. Patton. He was an eagerly scholarly man who produced more than a hundred papers. His own collection of important early French neurological papers was lost by arson in the Cairns library established in his honour at the Radcliffe. He believed himself to be 'very normal', a claim denied by his own very excellence. 'I don't think I'm very clever: I'm quite ordinary really'. What was unique was his personal bravery, his superb stamina, his integrity, and his capacity to brush aside obstacles. He was always looking ahead and was simple in the directness of his plans; people saw through them but found themselves co-operating because of his unique resolution, his charm and his utter dependability. He could not understand the petty, nor could he neglect any detail in 'working up a case', in Cushing's manner. He died in the Radcliffe Infirmary on 18 July 1952 after a singularly happy marriage, leaving a widow, two sons, and two daughters.

Also see

Sir Hugh Cairns, KBE

SA History Hub

<http://sahistoryhub.com.au/people/sir-hugh-cairns-kbe>

Published Biographies

Blood Sweat and Fears: Medical Practitioners and Medical Students of South Australian who served in World War 1.
Verco, Summers, Swain and Jelly 2014.

CAIRNS Sir Hugh William Bell

KBE DM MD FRCS

1896 - 1952



Hugh William Bell Cairns was born on the 26th June 1886 in Port Pirie, South Australia. He was the only son of William Cairns, a Scottish timber contractor, and Amy Florence, nee Bell. He was educated at Riverton High School and Adelaide Boys High School, where he was co-dux with John Besley Gillen, before his tertiary education at the University of Adelaide as an *exhibition scholar*. He reported that he spoke English and German.

Cairns joined the AIF on 11th May 1915 as a private soldier. He was nearly 19 years old and had already served in the 23rd ALH at Riverton for 11 months. He was 5ft 11ins and weighed 161lbs. He travelled with reinforcements for 3 AGH on HMAT *Mooltan* to the Middle East and joined his unit on Lemnos. He undertook medical orderly and nursing duties. He was promoted to Lance Corporal in September 1915 and, during this time, was admitted with influenza. He returned to Australia to complete his medical training on 13th March 1916 again performing nursing duties on the ship. He graduated from Adelaide University in 1917 as the Davies Thomas and Everard Scholar and South Australian Rhodes Scholar. He re-joined the army in August 1917 and on 9th November 1917 travelled on the *Port Sydney* to England and subsequently France where he served with 2 AGH, 3 AGH, 47th British Division and 15 Fd Amb.

He did not return to Australia following his service in France as he took up his Rhodes scholarship at Balliol College, Oxford in 1919. He rowed bow in the University Boat Race and was President of the Balliol Boat Club. He continued his training in pathology and then surgery at The London Hospital; he obtained the FRCS in 1921 and in this year married Barbara Forster the youngest daughter of AL Smith the Master of Balliol. His initial surgical interests were related to genito-urinary problems and he lectured on these topics at the RCS where he was the Hunterian Professor of anatomy. A growing interest

in neurosurgery saw him take leave to study with Cushing in Boston in 1926-7. He returned to establish a neurological surgery unit at The London Hospital and with others established the new school of British neurosurgery. Cairns had an international reputation when TE Lawrence was fatally injured in a motor bike accident in 1935 and he was summoned to treat him. His enthusiasm for neurosurgery was instrumental in encouraging Lord Nuffield to endow the new Nuffield chair in Surgery in Oxford in 1937 to which Cairns moved from London. He rejoined the Army in WW2 rising to the rank of Brigadier; he was advisor to the Ministry of Health on head injuries, and stressed the advantages of early air evacuation of the injured. Cairns established mobile neurosurgical units early in WW2. Nearly 20,000 patients were treated by these units in which Cairns and Florey (Adelaide Rhodes Scholar successor) were amongst the first to use penicillin in neurological injury. Widespread use of penicillin was born. A young RAMC surgeon, Dick Jepson, was in one of these units and later he moved to Adelaide and became the Professor of Surgery at the University of Adelaide and the Adelaide Hospital, 1958-1968. Early in the WW2 Cairns persuaded the army to make crash helmets for dispatch riders compulsory; this, now routine protection for bike riders, is one of Cairns many lasting legacies. He was appointed KBE in 1946 and the next year, when the Sims Commonwealth Professor appointed by the RCS, was awarded an honorary MD (Adelaide). Hugh William Cairns died of cancer in the Radcliffe Infirmary on 18th July 1952 leaving a widow, two sons and two daughters.

Sources:

Williams E. T. 'Cairns, Sir Hugh William Bell (1896-1952)'; *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cairns-sir-hugh-william-bell-5464/text9283>, accessed 14th December 2013
Photo: SLISA, GRG26_5_4_02328.
Notes from Dr Mary Jepson

Published Biographies

'Bell Family', ISBN 7 86252 262 6, 1986 Bell Family Committee (pages 111 and 112)

FIRST CHILD OF FLORENCE AND WILLIAM CAIRNS

SIR HUGH WILLIAM BELL CAIRNS

The following extracts are taken from "MEMORIES OF HUGH CAIRNS" by Sir Geoffrey Jefferson. (Reprinted from Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry, Volume 22, page 155, 1959-London Medical Association.)

"Hugh Cairns was born at Port Pirie in South Australia. He went to school there, later transferring to Riverton High School. There at Riverton they established themselves, his mother being still remembered as a very kind woman to whom all went for advice. She had natural talents and a zest for life; she was one to whom everyone in the village went with their troubles. Perhaps from her he inherited his love of music, which she taught. Hugh inherited something else from his father, a perfectionist trait in manual skills. The son was fortunate to have fused into his character so much of the best qualities of his parents. There is a story current at Riverton that a visitor asked him, as, aged about 4 or 5, what he wished to be, received the reply, 'the greatest doctor on earth'. Only just credible, I suppose. The child went far on the way to that impossible goal.

Hugh won a bursary that took him to Adelaide High School. Winning an exhibition he moved on to Adelaide University. The high spot in his life so far had been his acquisition of a Rhodes Scholarship in 1919. He went to Oxford University. Balliol was his College, and he could have no better. He gave it all his loyalty and admiration (in 1937 Balliol repaid him by making him a Fellow.) Before this he had two periods with the Army in the First World War. He went to the London Hospital after having a resident post at the Ratcliffe Infirmary.

In 1926 Hugh won a Rockefeller Travelling Scholarship and worked under Harvey Cushing in the U.S.A. He then decided to devote his life to neurological surgery as a specialty. Aided by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation he thought he could get by if he lived quietly. There were hardships as there were for all ambitious young men without capital in those times. The project could not have succeeded except with the collusion and help of his wife, Barbara Smith, the beautiful youngest daughter of the Master of Balliol, forging another link binding him to Oxford.

In October 1936, Lord Nuffield announced his intention of giving £1,250,000 for the creation of a medical research school. It was a foregone conclusion that Hugh himself would be the first Professor of Surgery.

Cairns told the story of the extremely efficient neurosurgical service that he so wisely built up for the



Sir Hugh Cairns son of William and Florrie Cairns.



Hugh Cairns home, England.

Army in his paper 'Neurosurgery in the British Army 1939-45'. Cairns, seeing so many of the Army's dispatch riders killed or maimed, carried out a vigorous campaign publicising the advantages of the crash helmet in papers published in 1941, 1942, 1943 and 1946.

Next to the crash helmet should come the penicillin story in which he applied the benefits of Howard Florey's industry and imaginative drive. Off Florey went

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with Cairns to North Africa and trials made in the Sicilian campaign proved so incredibly successful that a new phase in medicine had arrived.

His death, in 1952, soon after his 56th birthday cut him off when he was sailing on the full flood. All that he had done in the past was carrying him forward, it seemed, in a widening field. Hugh would never have lost control of his destiny. He was too shrewd for that, too practical. He left behind him an impressive achievement."

BIBLIOGRAPHY shows Hugh Cairns collected papers 1925-1952 numbering over a hundred. Hugh was Knighted for his great services to humanity. He was regarded as one of the world's most brilliant brain surgeons, and was in great demand from time to time in various countries.

Professor G.J. Fraenkel, Retired Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, (at Flinders University, South Australia) is writing a book about "This Great Man" which will probably be entitled "The Life And Times of Sir Hugh Cairns". He hopes to have it published in 1986.



Sir Hugh Cairns met at Airport by Lindsay Bell 1952.

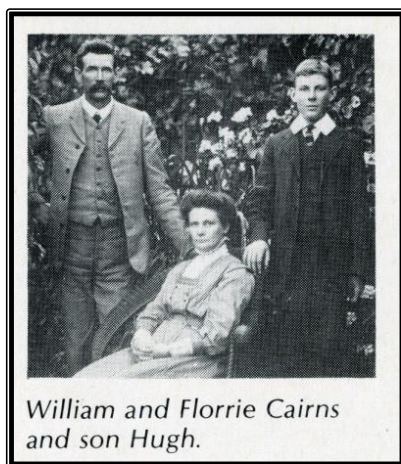
Note: The photograph of HWB Cairns and Lindsay Bell would be from Hugh's trip to Australia in 1948.

Biography – additional details

The three published biographies relating to Hugh give a good account of Hugh's life and work and war service. The additional photographs and newspaper articles below have been added to highlight Hugh's early life and some of his latter successes.

Early Life

Hugh William Bell Cairns was born on the 26th June 1886 at Port Pirie, SA, the only child of William Cairns and Amy Florence Cairns nee Bell. The family lived at Port Pirie then at Riverton, SA.



*William and Florrie Cairns
and son Hugh.*

H.W.B. Cairns – at Right

Date unknown

Schooling

Hugh was educated at Port Pirie then at Riverton High School where he won a bursary to attend Adelaide Boys High School. While at AHS, Hugh played tennis, cricket and football. Hewas a member of the 1910 Rifle Team, co-editor of the AHS School magazine in 1911 and a Lance Corporal in the Cadets in 1911.

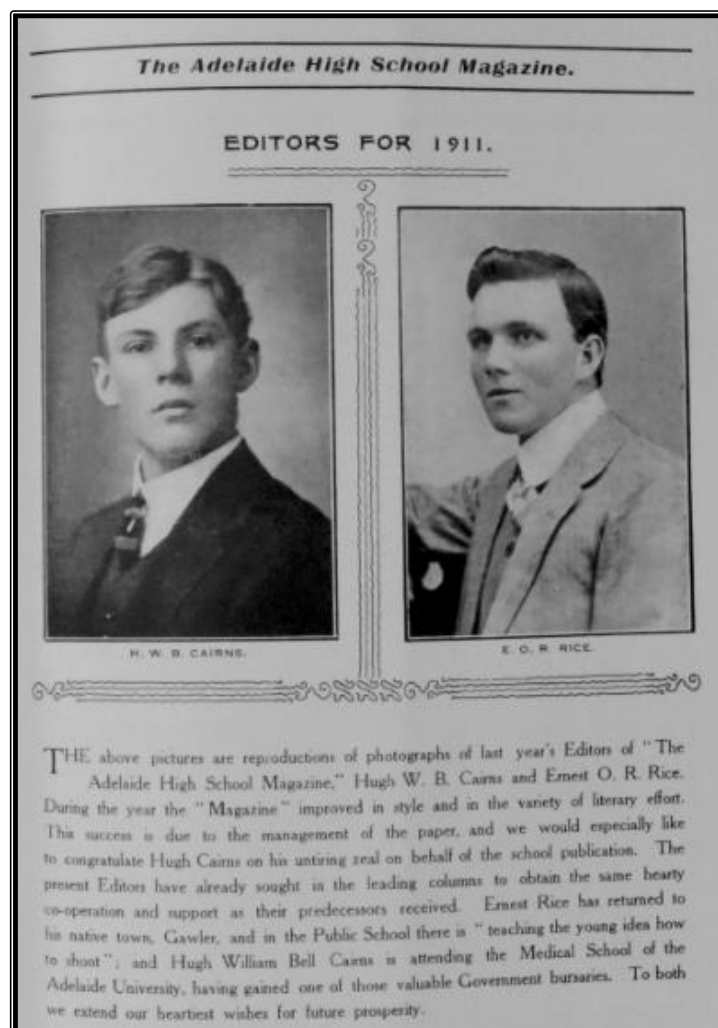
Further details of his scholastic, sporting and other achievements while at AHS were reported when Hugh later won the 1917 Rhodes Scholarship.

When the news of Mr. Cairns' selection reached the Adelaide High School the masters and pupils were delighted. Subsequently Mr. W. J. Adey, the headmaster, said:—"Mr. Cairns was a pupil here for three years, having been awarded a scholarship by the Government, entitling him to three years' secondary education. At the end of 1909 he passed the junior public examination in eight subjects with three credits, and was placed on the general honors list. In 1910 he passed the senior in eight subjects with two credits, and was again placed in the honors list. In 1911 he passed the higher public examination in five subjects, and as a result of that examination was awarded a Government bursary in medicine at the University. While here he took an active part in cricket, football, and tennis, was the editor of the 'School Magazine,' and generally was one of the most popular and capable students of his day."

1910 AHS Football and Rifle Teams



HWB Cairns Back Row – Fourth from Right



Adelaide University

Hugh commenced studying medicine at the University of Adelaide in 1912. Having completed third year medicine he enlisted for WWI but after 10 months service he was discharged and returned to Adelaide to complete his medical degree. In 1916 he was the acting Government pathologist for two weeks, house surgeon at the Childrens' Hospital (three months) and assistant at the Venereal Department of the Adelaide Hospital. Hugh graduating MB BS in July 1917, in a special ceremony for medical graduates before enlisting in the Australian Army Medical Corps.

While at Adelaide University Hugh was actively involved in sporting and other activities which were well documented in the newspaper reports (below) when he won the South Australian Rhodes Scholar 1917 (Oxford). He was secretary and treasurer of the University students' conference and procession in 1913.

At the completion of fourth year Hugh was awarded a Davies Thomas Scholarship, and in addition to the Rhodes Scholarship he was awarded the the Everard Scholarship in 1917.

Hugh performed in a character sketch at the December 1913, University Students' Concert, performing alongside fellow medical student Alan Morey.

1913 University Students' Concert



Alan Morey and Hugh Cairns

Alan Wilson Morey was a fellow St Peter's College and Adelaide University medical student. He had been awarded the 1913 Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford. Deferring his study, he enlisted in the UK joining the Royal Scots (Lothian Regiment) and was wounded in an action that saw him awarded the Military Cross. On recovery he joined the Royal Flying Corps but was again injured in a training accident. Crippled but able to walk with the aid of two sticks he completed his training with the 60 Squadron. Sadly he was killed in action when he collided with German flyer Lt. Martin Möbius of Jasta 7. Indications were that this was a deliberate action to protect another flyer that was under attack from the rear.

THE RHODES SCHOLAR.

MR. H. W. B. CAIRNS SELECTED.

A SOLDIER STUDENT.

The members of the Rhodes Scholarship Committee—His Excellency the Governor (Sir Henry Galway), the Chief Justice (Hon. G. J. R. Murray), Professors Henderson, Stirling, and Naylor, Mr. J. R. Fowler, and the Registrar of the University (Mr. C. R. Hodge)—met at Govern-



Mr. H. W. B. Cairns.

ment House on December 4 for the purpose of selecting the Rhodes Scholar for the ensuing year. There were eight candidates, but only six were able to appear before the committee, the other two having gone to the war. The meeting lasted nearly two hours, and upon the conclusion of the deliberations, the Registrar, who is secretary to the committee, announced that the scholarship had been awarded to Mr. Hugh William Bell Cairns, a medical student, who has a fine record. Mr. Cairns is a son of Mr. W. Cairns, of Riverton, and was born on June 26, 1896. He was educated first at the Riverton Public School, and later at the Adelaide High School, from which he passed to the University. His record, as submitted to the selection committee, was as follows:—

Education.

1905. First prize for essay (8 and 9 years' section), South Australian Exhibition.

1907. Public school fifth class certificate.

1908. Primary Examination passed; five subjects. Gained Government Junior Exhibition.

1909. Passed Junior Public Examination; eight subjects, three credits, general honors. Top of junior public form (at Adelaide High School).

1910. Passed Senior Public Examination; eight subjects, two credits, general honors. Top of senior public form, A.H.S. Qualified for Government Senior Exhibition.

1911. Passed Higher Public Examination; five subjects, general honors. Dux of Adelaide High School.

1912. Awarded Government Medical Bursary. Passed first-year medicine (first class).

1913. Completed second-year medicine.

1914. Passed third-year medicine (first class).

1915. On active service, May, 1915, till March, 1916.

1916. Passed fourth-year medicine (first class). Tied for the Davies-Thomas Scholarship.

In Manly Outdoor Sports.

1910 and 1911. Tennis, cricket, and football, at Adelaide High School.

1912. Lacrosse—C Grade, A.U.L.C. Tennis—C Grade, A.U.T.C.

1913. Lacrosse—A Grade and Inter-University and Junior Metropolitan team. Rowing—Junior Tyas Fours and Maiden Fours, A.U.B.C.

1914. Rowing—Junior Eight, Sir Edwin Eight, Inter-University Senior Tyas Fours, Dash Eight. Lacrosse—A Grade pennant matches and Inter-University.

1915. Rowing—Junior Eight. Lacrosse A Grade pennant, till joining A.I.F.

1916. Football—A and B Grade, A.U.F.C.

Leadership and Popularity.

1911. Lance-Corporal in cadets. Editor of Adelaide High School Magazine.

1914. On committees of University Boat and Lacrosse clubs. Secretary and treasurer on students' concert and procession.

1915. Secretary and treasurer of Boat Club. Delegate to committee of University Sports Association. On Lacrosse Club committee. Lance-Corporal in A.A.M.C. Assistant in charge, X-ray Department, No. 3, A.G.H.; in charge of out-patient dressing station, No. 3, A.G.H.

1916. Assistant Q.M.S. and compounder on transport A71. Treasurer of University Sports Association. Member of finance committee of A.U.S.A. Secretary and treasurer of Lacrosse Club. Delegate to S.A. Lacrosse Association. On committee of Boat Club. Acting Government pathologist for a fortnight. House surgeon at Children's Hospital (3 months). Assistant at Venereal Department, Adelaide Hospital.

Mr. Cairns was on active service at the front for 10 months, and was sent back to complete his medical course, so that he could return to duty on the medical staff. At present he is on duty at the Children's Hospital.

Adelaide University Sport

Adelaide University Sports Association

Hugh was a delegate to the AUSA in 1915 and in 1916. He was the Treasurer of the AUSA and a member of the finance committee of the AUSA.

Tennis

Hugh played C Grade Tennis with the AUTC in 1912.

Rowing

Hugh was a member of the AUBC (1913-15). In addition to rowing regularly in local regattas, Hugh was on the committee of the Boat Club for three years and he represented Adelaide University at the Intervarsity in 1914.

1914 – Adelaide University Intervarsity Boat Crew



H.W.B. Cairns – Fourth from Left

Football

On his return from active service to complete his medical degree, Hugh played football for the AUFC in the A and B grades in 1916.

Lacrosse

Hugh commenced playing C Grade Lacrosse for the AULC in 1912, and was a member of the 1912 B Grade Premiership team. In 1913 and 1914 he played A grade lacrosse for Adelaide University and represented the University at Intervarsity in those years. In 1913 Hugh was a member of the Junior Metropolitan Team.

Hugh was a member of the AULC committee (1914-16) including the roles of Secretary and Treasurer in 1916. He was the AULC's delegate to the SA Lacrosse Association in 1916.

Adelaide University Lacrosse Club - B Grade Premiers 1912



HWB Cairns – Seated – Far Right

Back row: A.W. Morey, H.K. Gault, N. Bennett, H. Finnis, N.C. Shierlaw, P. Wall
Front row: A.S. Blackburn, J. McGee (v.c.), W.J. Close (capt), W. Varley, H.W.B. Cairns, J. Hannan (emg.)

1913 Adelaide University IntersVarsity Lacrosse



HWB Cairns – Back Row Far Right

Back row: L.A. Whittington, C.L. Abbott, K. Healy, G.A. Yuill, E. Millhouse, J.S. Verco, H. Cairns.
Front row: N.G. Abbott, K.C. Godfrey, H.C.C. Rennie (capt), S.E. Holder, L.G. Tassie, H. Wagstaff.

1914 Adelaide University Intervarsity Lacrosse



HWB Cairns – Back Row – Far Right

Back row: E.M.Bagot, K.J.B.Healy, K.C.Godfrey, W.Varley, W.J.W.Close, H.W.D.Cairns (sic).

Middle row: E.W.J.Millhouse, G.A.Yuill (v-capt), L.A.Whittington (capt), C.A.L.Abbott, N.B.G.Abbott.

Front: C.A.M.West (umpire), E.M.Weatherill.

World War I

Refer to the excerpt from *Blood Sweat and Fears: Medical Practitioners and Medical Students of South Australian who Served in World War I. Verco, Summers, Swain and Jelly 2014.*

Below is a letter from Hugh to the teachers and students of AHS which was published in the AHS School Magazine in 1915.

The following is an extract from a letter sent by Hugh Cairns, who in 1911 was one of *The Magazine* Editors. He won a medical scholarship, tenable at the Adelaide University :-

"You will probably be very surprised to receive this letter from me, and to know that I am sailing for England with the No. 3 Australian Double General Hospital. We go to London direct to equip, and then our destination is censored.

"Well, I had hankered after going as soon as I heard Drs. de Crespigny and Cudmore - our best honoraries - were going, but did not like to take the step on account of domestic arrangements. Father and mother thought that perhaps it was better to stay, but advised me to see Mr. Noack. He advised me to go, and when I went home on Thursday, May 6 (the casualty lists had come out), mother and father were keen on my going. I went to Sydney next day, and went into camp on Monday. The boat sailed from Sydney on the following Saturday. We arrived in Melbourne on Monday, and I came overland to Adelaide, and had a day at home before rejoining the boat again on Thursday. It was all done very suddenly, but really in one way I think it is best to dispense with a lot of these farewells.

"As regards the wisdom of the step, the medical experience will not be of much value to me afterwards; one may gain experience in operative technique - but the worldly experience will be good and I hope to be able to come back again and finish my work with a more experienced outlook on things. Then, again, I would sooner go now than push through and become qualified at the age of twenty, and have to wait a year for registration. Also I will be with doctors aforementioned, and they are always willing to teach.

"To cap all, one would have lasting regret if the war finished and one had not helped.

"If we settle in England, and there is a possibility of it, I will probably be able to do my membership of the College of Surgeons. My scholarship is to be held over for me.

"Will you please give my best wishes to all my former teachers and contemporaries. I am very sorry that I did not have time to come up and say good-bye to you all. I am realizing every day more and more how much I gained out of the A.H.S., and will always be keenly interested in hearing anything about it.

"We have a very fine lot of chaps with us. I am a private at present, but apart from rank hope to get some good work to do when the hospital starts work."

Midwinter, 1915, page 19-20

Hugh's personal thoughts on his early WWI service are recorded in 'Diary of Hugh William Bell Cairns, Acting Lance-Corporal, AAMC, No.3 AGH. January - February 1916". This is an unpublished document typed from loose papers in a diary of February-September 1918 sent to G.J. Fraenkel by Dr. Margaret Yekutieli (Hugh's daughter) in December, 1987. It begins with the evacuation of No. 3 AGH from Lemnos after the Dardanelles campaign and ends with his departure for Sydney, where he was discharged to complete his medical course.
(<https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/220885493>).

AHS School Magazine - 1916.

Hugh Cairns has returned from the front to complete his medical course at the University. Hugh was on the Island of Lemnos most of his time, and was attached to the staff of Major Harris and Sir Alexander MacCormack. Most of the surgeons and staff of the 3rd General Hospital came from Sydney but two other old High School students were in the same unit - namely Roy Beeston and C. S. Bertram.
Cairns was engaged for much of the time in the Rontgen ray department.

AHS School Magazine – Christmas 1916.

There was a special assembly of the whole School called suddenly about noon on Monday, December 4, and great enthusiasm prevailed when it was announced that the purpose for which the assembly was called was to commemorate immediately the success of one of its past pupils. The School has indeed been much honoured by the doings of many of its old students, but perhaps the blue ribbon as far as University attainments and Good-fellowships are concerned was attained on that day when it was announced to the school that Mr. Hugh William Bell Cairns was selected as the Rhodes Scholar for South Australia for 1917. We heartily wish Mr. Cairns the health and vigour to enjoy to the full the benefit which this great scholarship confers upon its fortunate recipients. For the benefit of those of more recent date at the School, we attach here Mr. Cairns' school record.

Mr. Cairns was a student at this School for three years. Having been awarded a Scholarship by the Government entitling him to three years secondary education, he entered the School in January, 1909. At the end of that year he passed the Junior Public University Examination in eight subjects with three credits, and was placed on the General Honours List. In 1910 he passed the senior Public University Examination in eight subjects, with two credits, and was again placed on the General Honours List. In 1911 he passed the Higher Public examination in five subjects and for the third time he secured a place on the General Honours List. As a result of this examination he was awarded a Government Bursary at the Adelaide University, and, being only fifteen years of age at the time, he had to obtain special permission to enter upon his University course. In 1911, also, he was "dux" of the School. He was an active member of the tennis, cricket, and football teams of the School, and was also editor of the School Magazine, a quarterly production. Since leaving us he has had a brilliant course at the University, and has been twelve months at the front, and has now returned to complete his medical degree, and will return to the front before taking up his residence in Oxford. Apart from his Scholarship, Mr. Cairns was a lad of many parts, and was held in high esteem by teachers and students alike, and he is generally remembered as one of the strongest and most popular lads that has passed through the School.

Christmas, 1916, page 15-19

Oxford University

From <http://www.whonamedit.com/doctor.cfm/3166.html>

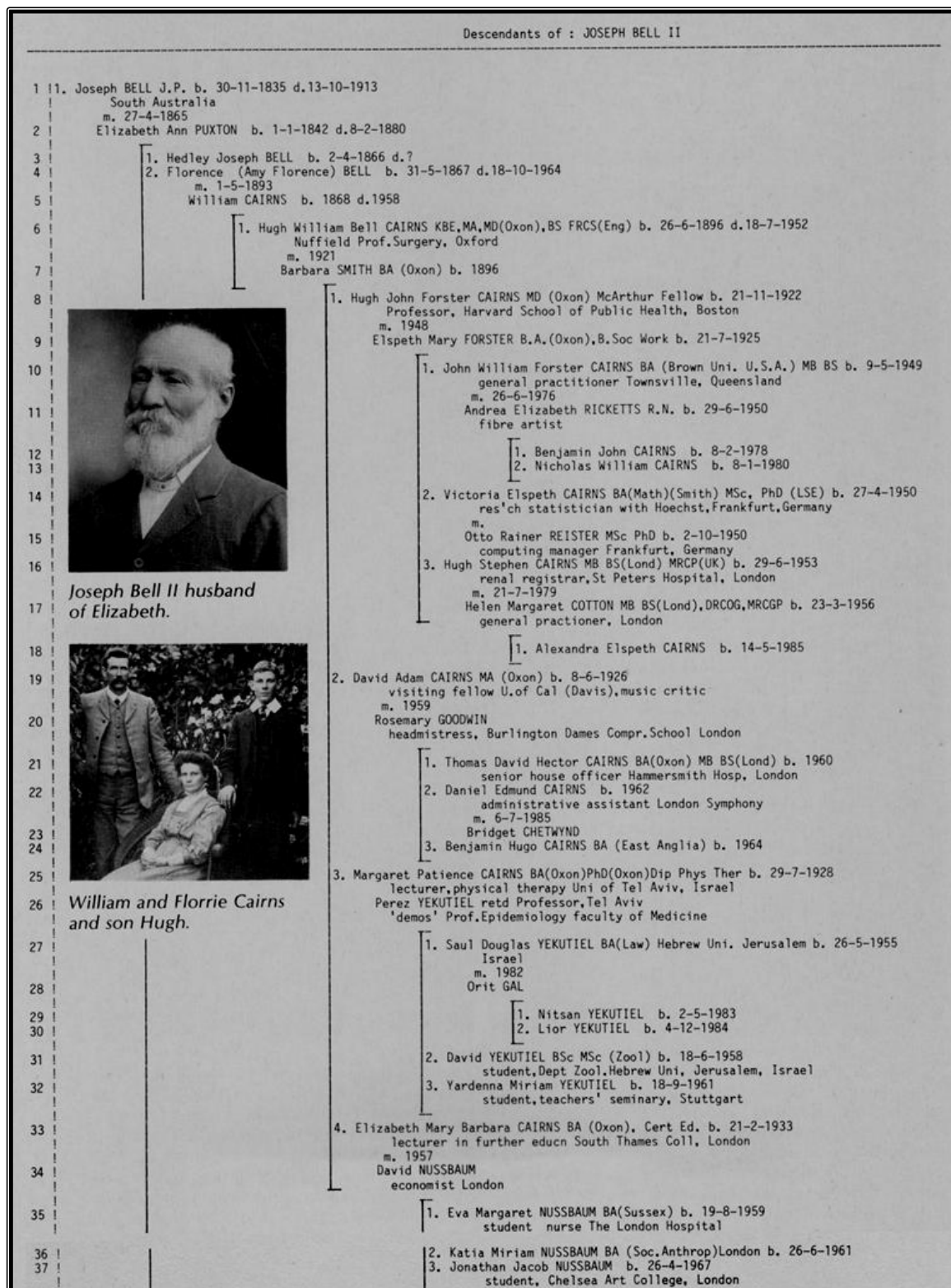
'In January 1919 he obtained leave from the army in order to begin studies at Oxford. He entered Balliol College but also found time for another serious occupation, rowing. He was president of the Balliol Boat Club and distinguished himself by representing Oxford as a bow in the University boat race of 1920. The race was won by Cambridge.

After six months in the Radcliffe Infirmary as house surgeon, he utilized his Rhodes scholarship to begin his long connexion with the London Hospital, first in the pathology institute, then in the surgical unit, becoming F.R.C.S. in 1921.

He was greatly admired by the family of A. L. Smith, the Master of Balliol, and by Lady Sherrington and Lady Osler, through whom he first met Harvey Williams Cushing (1869-1939). While staying with the Smiths at their house in Northumberland he became engaged to their youngest daughter Barbara, a graduate in history from Girton College, Cambridge. They were married in Oxford in November 1921, the day after Cairns passed the first FRCS examination.'

Marriage and Family

Hugh married Barbara Foster Smith in 1921. They had four children, Hugh (b 1922), David (b 1926), Margaret (b 1928) and Elizabeth (b 1933). All four children graduated from Oxford and their qualifications, career and children (at about 1985) are detailed in the excerpt from 'Bell Family' below.



Career

Hugh's career is fully detailed in the published biographies above. The following are some newspaper articles from Australian papers relating to his career.

February 1929 – Rockefeller Travelling Scholarship

DR. HUGH CAIRNS
REPORTS ON BRAIN CLINIC.
LONDON, February 11.
The Medical Research Council has published the report of an Adelaide Rhodes scholar, Dr. H. W. B. Cairns, the winner of the Rockefeller travelling scholarship, which he utilised in spending a year at Dr. Harvey Cushing's brain clinic at Boston.
The report describes wonderful operations and new methods devised to meet difficulties of the soft, rubber-like consistency of the brain matter. The clinic conducts only one operation daily, and sometimes it takes all day. The mortality in the operations is less than 10 per cent. Dr. Cairns is now assistant surgeon in the London Hospital.

December 1932

SIGHT RESTORED
SURGICAL TRIUMPH
AUSTRALIAN SPECIALIST
(AUSTRALIAN CABLE SERVICE.)
LONDON, Saturday.—An operation employing a new technique and revealing the marvellous progress made in brain surgery, has restored the sight of a teacher, who was a patient in the London hospital, suffering from a pituitary tumour.
Prior to the discovery of the new technique, this operation would probably have been fatal, owing to the difficulty of preventing haemorrhage; but the technique has enabled a diathermic current gradually to break through the brain cells, healing them again as it passed to the tumour.
This part of the operation occupied several hours, owing to the inaccessibility of the tumour. The whole operation lasted a day.
It necessitated an eye specialist and four doctors. It is anticipated that the perfection of the technique will save many lives.
The chief surgeon in the brain operation was Dr. H. W. B. Cairns, a former Adelaide Rhodes scholar, and now staff surgeon at the London hospital.

January 1937

OXFORD POST FOR DR. H. W. B. CAIRNS S.A. Rhodes Scholar's Work As Brain Surgeon

LONDON, January 27.

Dr. H. W. B. Cairns, who has been appointed professor of surgery at the University of Oxford, under the new system of medical research made possible by Lord Nuffield's gift of £2,000,000, is a native of South Australia. He is a former Hunterian professor of the Royal College of Surgeons and is an authority on the surgery of the nervous system. He holds appointments at the London Hospital and the National Hospital of Nervous Diseases.

Dr. Cairns won the South Australian Rhodes scholarship in 1916, after having spent 10 months with the A.I.F. before being sent back to Australia, to complete his medical course. The son of Mr. William Cairns, of Riverton, he was dux of the Adelaide High School in 1911, and gained the Government medical bursary the following year. He had passed his third year examinations when he enlisted in May, 1915.

He did not immediately take up his Rhodes scholarship, but completed his medical course, and returned to the Front, serving until the Armistice with the 5th Australian Division. Entering Balliol College in January, 1919, he began a successful career in England. He became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1921, and later, while surgeon to the neurosurgical department of the London Hospital, achieved a name as one of the most brilliant brain surgeons in England.

Dr. Cairns is one of the few living surgeons who have successfully operated on the living brain.

It will be recalled that he was one of the surgeons called in to operate on Colonel T. E. Lawrence (of Arabia) after the motor cycle accident in Dorsetshire, which proved fatal.

January 1940

Australian Doctor Attending Unity Mitford

LONDON, January 28.

The former Australian Rhodes Scholar and brain specialist, Dr. H. W. B. Cairns, at present Nuffield Professor of Surgery at Oxford, is attending the Hon. Unity Freeman-Mitford, who has two bullet wounds in the head, one of which has injured the brain. Her condition is serious. Private detectives are stationed at the hospital to ensure privacy.

The Hon. Unity Freeman-Mitford returned to England recently from Germany. Extraordinary precautions for privacy attended her return.

World War II

Refer to the excerpt from *Blood Sweat and Fears: Medical Practitioners and Medical Students of South Australian who Served in World War 1*. Verco, Summers, Swain and Jelly 2014.

- August 1943

**EXPERIMENTING WITH
POTENT DRUG
CLAIMED TO BE BETTER THAN
SULPHANILIMIDE**

Professor H. W. Florey and Professor H. W. B. Cairns, both of Oxford University, are with the Eighth Army in Sicily experimenting with wounded soldiers and lecturing to army doctors on the possibility of the new drug "Penicillin," which is claimed to be many hundred times more potent than M. and B. 693 (sulphanilimide).

Professor Florey, who, with his wife, recently described in the "Lancet" the new drug's first extensive trial, has been seconded to the Eighth Army from Oxford.

Penicillin, which is obtained from a minute blue-green fungus, prevents the growth of certain disease bacteria in the human body. Local application to infected wounds had also proved very effective, but its manufacture in even very small quantities is so tedious and lengthy that the entire output is at present reserved for the forces.



HWB Cairns



HWB Cairns

December 1945

Patton Is Paralysed

LONDON, Tues.—A bulletin says that Lieut.-General George Patton is completely paralysed as a result of the motor smash near Mannheim.

An earlier report stated that General Patton was reacting well to the initial shock of dislocation of the vertebrae, although his condition remained critical.

Australian Professor Hugh William Bell, of Cairns, has been flown to Heidelberg Hospital to attend the general.

● *Accident occurred on the autobahn (motor road) outside Mannheim when the general's sedan collided with a big army truck.*

Hugh was appointed Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire in June 1946.

PROFESSOR CAIRNS KNIGHTED

Distinguished S.A. Surgeon

Professor Hugh Cairns, one of South Australia's most brilliant graduates, has been made a KBE, according to a message from London. Sir Hugh William Bell Cairns was born at Port Pirie on June 26, 1896, and was educated at Adelaide High School, at which he won an exhibition enabling him to go on to the University where he was Davies Thomas Scholar and Everard Scholar in the medical school. As an eminent surgeon he has attended many notable patients. Among his memorable calls he motored 100 miles to the deathbed of Lawrence of Arabia, fatally injured in a motor cycle accident in England.

Visit to Australia - January 1948

At 12, Sir Hugh Saw Himself a Doctor

SIR Hugh William Bell Cairns, 52 next June, who is back home in South Australia for a short holiday after 30 years abroad, has the reputation of being the greatest brain surgeon in Britain.

Perhaps only one South Australian in thousands had heard of this Riverton-born doctor before this week—a man who 11 years ago gave up a private practice reputedly worth £25,000 a year to become Nuffield Professor of Surgery at Oxford University.

There's not the slightest trace of any "Oxford accent" about Sir Hugh. He is 6 ft. tall, his thinning hair is grey, and he has a warm smile and pleasant manner that set people at ease inside 10 seconds.

His father was a building contractor; there was no medicine in his blood, so to speak, as there is with so many doctors.

"I don't know why I wanted to be a doctor, except that it was fixed in my mind as my job from the time I was 12—maybe earlier," he says.

"Australia, and particularly South Australia, offered so many opportunities 35 years ago. Scholarships took me from Riverton Primary School to Adelaide High and to the University, and I don't think I was outstanding."

SOUTH Australian Rhodes Scholar in 1918, he went to Oxford. There, after doing very well, he worried whether, on completion of his course, he should return to his native land.

He felt he owed it to Australia to come back. Rudyard Kipling, Rhodes trustee, whom he asked for advice, told him: "Cairns, it doesn't matter where you work, so long as it is somewhere marked red on the map."

He stayed, and in 1932 won world notice when reports of his operation on a school teacher suffering from a pituitary tumor of the brain were published.

He restored sight to the patient in an operation lasting a whole day.

It was a successful application of the discovery of Dr. Harvey Cushing, of Boston (U.S.A.), of the use of diathermic current for brain surgery.

FIVE years before the young Riverton doctor had spent a year working with Dr. Cushing, renowned as a brain surgeon.

At Oxford, too, he was able to work with the man he classes as the greatest living English physiologist, Sir Charles Sherrington. It was Sherrington who furthered his interest in the nervous system of the body.

That interest led Sir Hugh on to brain surgery, such a highly specialised and difficult field of medical science that few attempt its intricacies.

There are no packed galleries of students at Oxford when Sir Hugh and his team perform their major operations. "We don't dramatise this work," he says. "We want our team of four or five men on the operation to learn and know everything, then in two or three years they are ready to do the work, too. Anyway, watching us would not help the medical student with exams to pass."

ASKED why so many Australians had made their mark in Britain—men like Sir Howard Florey, of penicillin fame, Professor Marcus Oliphant, atomic scientist, Sir Claude Gibb, engineer—Sir Hugh said:

"The impact of life in Australia is sharper than that in Britain. When Australians go to Britain they have a more

**Close-up of a
South Australian
who has be-
come famous in
the difficult
field of brain
surgery.**



Sir Hugh Cairns

practical, if sometimes less subtle, perception of their path-way and goal than Englishmen.

"Life for the British is a little complicated, and many good Britons who work as brilliantly and hard as Australians don't immediately choose the right track. Australians usually know where they are going."

Sir Hugh, back here on a travelling professorship, endowed by Mr. Arthur Sims, of New Zealand, to promote better medical liaison between Empire countries, leaves for New Zealand this week to begin lectures there on January 15. He will be back in Adelaide in March.

1948 – Arriving at Parafield Airport



*Dr. Barham Black, Sir Hugh Cairns and Dr. Leonard Charles Edward Lindon
© The Advertiser*

Death

Hugh died in Oxford, England on 18 July 1952.

Death Of Sir Hugh Cairns, S.A.-Born Brain Surgeon

The death of Sir Hugh Cairns at Oxford on Friday came as a tragic blow to surgery, but the brilliant South Australian-born brain surgeon's own organising ability and work before his death has ensured that his research will continue.

As Nuffield Professor of Surgery at Oxford University, Sir Hugh Cairns leaves a highly-trained team of co-workers to develop his techniques of surgical treatment for insanity, head injuries, and inter-cranial infections.

He died following an abdominal operation in April.

Sir Hugh Cairns was the son of a building contractor. He started school at Port Pirie public school and progressed by way of Riverton High School, Adelaide High School, the University of Adelaide, and Oxford University on his own merits, winning scholarships which carried him through intensive study spread over 20 years.

When Sir Hugh Cairns was in his fifth year of medicine, the 1914-18 war broke out.

He was among a group of Adelaide medical students who immediately enlisted as privates in the AMC. He went to Gallipoli and served in a general hospital at Lemnos.

The Army was in desperate need of doctors and sent him, with other students, home to complete their medical training.

When he had qualified as a doctor, he re-enlisted and with the rank of captain served with the Army in France.

He took up his Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford in 1919.

His work at the London Hospital achieved a world-wide reputation and he was credited with a practice worth £25,000 a year.

In 1936, Sir Hugh Cairns was selected as Nuffield Professor of Surgery at Oxford, and he chose at great financial sacrifice this combination of teaching and research.



IN MEMORIAM: SIR HUGH CAIRNS

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In Memoriam

SIR HUGH CAIRNS, K.B.E., D.M., F.R.C.S.

(1896–1952)

THE death of Sir Hugh Cairns has come as a sad shock to his many friends all over the world. He died in Oxford on July 18, 1952, after an illness lasting for six months.

Hugh William Bell Cairns was born in Adelaide, South Australia, on June 26, 1896, the only child of a Scottish father and an Australian mother, both of whom have survived him. He was educated at Adelaide High School and in the Medical School of the University, where his training was interrupted by the first world war. After serving in the ranks for a time, he returned to qualify in medicine in 1917, and then obtained a commission in the Australian Army Medical Corps, with which he saw active service in France. His general abilities at his university were recognized by the award of a Rhodes Scholarship, and this brought him to Balliol in 1919, where he read physiology, demonstrated anatomy, and rowed, getting his blue in the Oxford boat of 1920. At Balliol, too, he met the youngest daughter of A. L. Smith, then Master, who was to become his wife. By his entry into this large and gifted family, he acquired relations who were to provide him with much interest and happiness for the rest of his life.

On the termination of his scholarship he became house surgeon to Mr. E. C. Bevers at the Radcliffe Infirmary, and from there he went to the London Hospital in 1921. He got the F.R.C.S. in the same year, and the next few years were spent in house appointments, the pathology department, and as first assistant in the surgical unit. During this period he professed a special interest in genito-urinary surgery, and he was distinguished by his ability for hard work and thoroughness rather than for technical brilliance, but it was these qualities which brought him to the attention of his seniors.

The London was at this time ripe for developments in neurological surgery because Souttar had a special interest in it, and Riddoch knew of the results which were being obtained in Cushing's clinic in America. The Rockefeller Foundation was sympathetic, and so it came about that Cairns went to Boston in 1926, having been appointed supernumerary assistant surgeon at the London and given leave of absence to learn this new specialty. In Harvey Cushing he found the master he could admire unreservedly, and from Cushing he learned the surgical technique, the organization of a clinic, and the system of records which he was to employ so effectively and to hand on to generations of his own pupils. He learned his lesson well and became one of Cushing's favourite disciples. It was an occasion of great satisfaction and happiness for both master and pupil when in 1938 Oxford University conferred the honorary D.Sc. on Dr. Cushing (*see photograph, p. 174*).

He came back from Boston in 1927 with an assured appointment at the London, but for some

time life was not easy. He was a young unknown, doing only neurological surgery, and doing it in a way which seemed highly unorthodox, if not unnecessary, to those in London who were already operating on the brain and spinal cord. His beds were scattered over the vast hospital, there were often difficulties in getting an operating theatre, office accommodation was scanty, assistants were in



SIR HUGH CAIRNS, K.B.E.

1896–1952

irregular supply, nurses had to be trained, and this kind of surgery was not popular with anaesthetists. These were pioneering problems in London, although Jefferson in Manchester and Dott in Edinburgh were establishing the specialty in those centres and meeting the same difficulties. These three men made a school of British neurological surgery of which we have cause to be proud, and each has contributed a particular virtue. Their difficulties are recorded as a matter of historical interest because, in this country at least, they are unlikely to occur again.

Legacies

United Kingdom

The Cairns Library (one of the Bodleian Libraries) at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford and the medical school Hugh Cairns Surgical Society in Oxford are both named for Hugh. The Sir Hugh Cairns Memorial Trust and the Cairns Memorial Lecture.

Adelaide University

The Sir Hugh Cairns Memorial Scholarship was originally established in 1953 by a donation of \$2,100 to the University by the Committee of the Sir Hugh Cairns Memorial Association for the purpose of founding a prize to perpetuate the memory of Sir Hugh Cairns, a former student of the Adelaide High School. The Endowment now supports a scholarship for a student of the Adelaide High School who is commencing a Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery Degree at the University of Adelaide.

Motorcycle helmets

When Colonel T.E. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia") was fatally injured in a motorcycle accident in May 1935, one of the several doctors attending him was a young neurosurgeon, Hugh Cairns. He was moved by the tragedy in a way that was to have far-reaching consequences. At the beginning of the Second World War, he highlighted the unnecessary loss of life among army motorcycle dispatch riders as a result of head injuries. His research concluded that the adoption of crash helmets as standard by both military and civilian motorcyclists would result in considerable saving of life. It was 32 years later, however, that motorcycle crash helmets were made compulsory in the United Kingdom. As a consequence of treating T.E. Lawrence and through his research at Oxford, Sir Hugh Cairns' work largely pioneered legislation for protective headgear by motorcyclists and subsequently in the workplace and for many sports worldwide. Over subsequent decades, this has saved countless lives.

Neurosurgery, Volume 50, Issue 1, 1 January 2002, Pages 176–180, Published: 01 January 2002

<https://doi.org/10.1097/00006123-200201000-00026>

For a more detailed story of the life of Sir Hugh Cairns see

- 'Hugh Cairns: First Nuffield Professor of Surgery, University of Oxford', Gustav Julius Fraenkel, Oxford University Press, 1991, ISBN 10: [0192620959](https://doi.org/10.1093/0192620959) / ISBN 13: [9780192620958](https://doi.org/10.1093/9780192620958)
- 'The Cairns Tradition' Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry 1990; 53: 188-193
jnnp.bmj.com/content/jnnp/53/3/188.full.pdf

Jubilee 150 Plaque



North Terrace, Adelaide

Profile Compiled by: Beth Filmer (AUFC/AUCC WW1 Memorial Committee)

Profilers Note:-

Sir Hugh William Bell Cairns' mother Amy Florence Bell was the daughter of Joseph Bell II (born 1835). Joseph Bell II was the son of Joseph Bell (born 1809). Joseph Bell, the second son of Douglas Bell and Sarah Elizabeth Rhodes, was one of the early settlers in South Australia.

Joseph's elder brother George Bell (born 1800-d 1848). After his death, George's widow (Mary) and the children migrated to South Australia. George and Mary's second child Sarah Ann Bell became the second wife of Thomas Stephen Filmer, who had arrived in South Australia on the 4th December 1838. Sarah Ann Bell and Thomas Stephen Filmer are the Great Great Grandparents of EE (Beth) Filmer and Janne L Filmer (Adelaide University Football Club Historians).

Sources and Acknowledgements

Medical Practitioners and Medical Students of South Australian who Served in World War 1. *Verco, Summers, Swain and Jelly 2014*

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<https://doi.org/10.1097/00006123-200201000-00026>

Lawrence of Arabia, Sir Hugh Cairns, and the Origin of Motorcycle Helmets

Nicholas F. Maartens, F.R.C.S.(SN) Andrew D. Wills, M.R.C.S. Christopher B.T. Adams, M.A., M.Ch., F.R.C.S.

<http://sahistoryhub.com.au/people/sir-hugh-cairns-kbe>

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

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

<https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/223649>

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

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=3184971>

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

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

1912 Lacrosse <http://hdl.handle.net/2440/50878>

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1914 Lacrosse <http://hdl.handle.net/2440/58450>

<http://hdl.handle.net/2440/47820>

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

(Trove Newspaper articles tagged – Hugh William Bell Cairns)

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

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State Library of South Australia <http://www.catalog.slsa.sa.gov.au/>

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Kym Beilby - AUFC/AUCC WW1 Researcher