



Lieut. Geoffrey James Rodger



Played with Adelaide University



Football Club: B Grade (1914)

Degree: B.Sc. (Forestry) (1915)

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 Geoffrey James Rodger. It is compilation of information and photographs collected from a variety of historical sources.

The AIF Project

<https://aif.adfa.edu.au/showPerson?pid=259491>



Geoffrey James RODGER

Regimental number	11104
Date of birth	--/06/1894
Place of birth	Kensington South Australia
Religion	Roman Catholic
Occupation	Civil servant
Address	Jamestown, South Australia
Marital status	Single
Age at embarkation	21
Next of kin	Father, James Rodger, Box 16 General Post Office, Broken Hill, New South Wales
Enlistment date	20 December 1915
Date of enlistment from Nominal Roll	7 January 1916
Rank on enlistment	Driver
Unit name	S.T25.16.3C25
Embarkation details	Unit embarked from Adelaide, South Australia, on board HMAT A19 <i>Afric</i> on 9 June 1916
Regimental number from Nominal Roll	Commissioned
Rank from Nominal Roll	Lieutenant
Unit from Nominal Roll	26th Battalion
Promotions	2nd Lieutenant Unit: INF25 Promotion date: 1 March 1917 Lieutenant Unit: 7 LT Mtr Bty Promotion date: 19 July 1917 Unit: INF26
Fate	Returned to Australia 8 April 1919

Service Record

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=8035826>

W11449

OFFICER
W 11449

MILITARY FORCES.

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

ATTESTATION PAPER OF PERSONS ENLISTED FOR SERVICE ABROAD

No. 8343 Name RODGER Geoffrey James
11104 Unit B Coy 2ND DEPOT BATTAL 25 ASC.
Joined on 20.12.15 7-1-16

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

1. What is your Name? ... Geoffrey James Rodger
2. In the Parish of ... in or
near the Town of Kennington
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.) ... NB
4. What is your age? ... 21 6/12
5. What is your trade or calling? ... (Undergraduate) Civil Servant
6. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so,
where, to whom, and for what period? ... Adelaide (university) No
7. Are you married? ... No
8. Who is your next of kin? (Address to be stated) ...
Father, Mr James Rodger
Box 16 S.P.O. Broken Hill
Chew South Wales
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 ...
Yes See Cadets 7913 Batts
24th AFA 24th Infantry 75th Batts
still serving
12. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous
service? ... Yes Exempt Recd
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, Geoffrey James Rodger 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 three-fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my
service for the support of my wife and children

Date DEC 20 1915 G. Rodger
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.

WD 56355

RSL Virtual War Memorial

<https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/323799>

RODGER, Geoffrey James

Service Number: 11104

Last Rank: Driver

Last Unit: 3rd Divisional Train

Occupation: Conservator of forests

Died: unknown, place of death not yet discovered, date not yet discovered

Memorials: Adelaide HB05 Attorney General's Department Old Treasury Building (Medina Hotel) 1***

World War 1 Service

9 Jun 1916: Embarked Driver, SN 11104, 3rd Divisional Train, HMAT Afric, Adelaide

9 Jun 1916: Involvement Driver, SN 11104

9 Jun 1916: Embarked Driver, SN 11104, HMAT Afric, Adelaide

9 Jun 1916: Involvement Driver, SN 11104, 3rd Divisional Train

<https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/542392>

Service Number: S69586

Enlisted: 25 March 1942, Adelaide, SA

Last Rank: Lieutenant

Born: Adelaide, SA, 4 July 1894

Home Town: Tusmore, South Australia

World War 2 Service

25 Mar 1942: Involvement Lieutenant, SN S69586

25 Mar 1942: Enlisted Adelaide, SA

26 Oct 1944: Discharged

Published Biography – Australian Dictionary of Biography

Geoffrey James Rodger

by Pauline Payne

Geoffrey James Rodger (1894-1982), forester, was born on 4 July 1894 at Kensington, South Australia, eldest child of James Rodger, accountant, and his wife Bridget (Bebe) Mary Agnes, née Murphy. Educated at Christian Brothers' College, Adelaide, Geoffrey graduated from the University of Adelaide (B.Sc., 1915) with a degree in forestry.

On 20 December 1915 Rodger enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force and in June 1916 embarked for England. Following officer training, he was commissioned and sent to the Western Front in March 1917. While serving with the 7th Light Trench Mortar Battery, he was promoted to lieutenant on 19 July and lightly wounded at Ypres, Belgium, on 20 September. He inspected French and Belgian forests in his free time. In April 1919 he took leave to attend the Interim Forestry Authority in London. He returned to Australia in October 1919 and, after his AIF appointment was terminated on 19 December, he joined the Reserve of Officers.

Back in South Australia, Rodger worked briefly for the Forestry Department before accepting an appointment with the New South Wales Forestry Commission, becoming assistant forester in 1921. In 1924 he moved to Western Australia to take up a position as divisional forest officer. Appointed chief forester in the Federal Capital Territory in 1926, Rodger helped to establish the Territory's forest service. He was seconded (1927-28) by the Commonwealth government to report on forestry resources in Tasmania; his *A Forest Survey of Tasmania* was published in 1928. Rodger was chief working plans officer, later senior officer, in the New South Wales Forestry Commission from 1928 until 1935. During this time he achieved an annual rate of about 5000 acres (2024 ha) in the establishment of plantations of exotic species, mostly pines. He married Alice Valerie (Val) Armstrong on 9 November 1929 at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Randwick, Sydney.

In 1935 Rodger was appointed South Australia's conservator of forests. South Australia was poorly endowed with native forest and its climate and soil limited potential for commercial growth. However, helped by progressive late nineteenth-century legislation and fine leadership from an early conservator, John Ednie Brown, it had developed a valuable forest resource based on plantations. At the time of Rodger's appointment his department was the subject of a royal commission. He tightened financial control and promoted better silviculture of the exotic radiata pine forests, including improved thinning practices.

World War II brought new challenges. With a depleted workforce the department was dealing with heavy demand for the State's plantation timber. In his additional role as deputy timber controller for the Commonwealth, Rodger had to implement controls on the general use and movement of wood products in South Australia. Under his leadership the State's forest resources met wartime demands and emerged with excellent postwar prospects; high grade softwood lumber was now available from maturing pine plantations. Good relations had been developed with private forestry and timber industries in the south-east region of the State. A second State sawmill was opened at Nangwarry and the first pine pulping and rotary veneer-peeling factories began operations. In 1942-44 Rodger served in the Volunteer Defence Corps.

Rodger became director general of the Commonwealth Forestry and Timber Bureau in Canberra in 1946. To encourage the States to make joint representation of forestry interests to the Commonwealth government, he revived meetings of heads of State forestry services that had been in abeyance for several decades.

In 1946 Rodger represented Australia at a conference of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation held at Copenhagen. The following year he led the Australian delegation to the Empire Forestry Conference in London. In 1951 the Western Australian government appointed him royal commissioner to inquire into various forestry practices. He chaired the fourth Australian Fire Control Conference—a landmark in Australian fire research—in 1954, and the Commonwealth Forestry Conference in Australia and New Zealand in 1957. Appointed royal commissioner for the Western Australian government in 1961, Rodger used his expertise in fire research to produce a report on the bushfires of 1960 and 1961 with recommendations for future practice in bushfire control.

A prime mover in the formation of the Australian Forestry Council (1965), Rodger had been a founding member (1935) of the Institute of Foresters of Australia. It was a challenging task. The foresters working in the various states

had been trained to different levels in different institutions and the issue of membership qualifications was contentious. Rodger worked hard to reconcile the parties so that a practical working compromise could be reached. He represented South Australia on the institute's first council and was made an honorary member (1966), one of only four to have this status in his lifetime.

Rodger's interest in and contribution to the standing of professional forestry, especially in Australia but also internationally, were profound and far reaching. Down-to-earth, hard-working and reserved in his manner, he fought tirelessly for forestry in Australia. He was a long-standing member and local sub-branch president of the Returned Services League of Australia. His other interests included golf and horse racing. On his retirement in 1959 Rodger returned to South Australia with his wife and son, becoming a director and forestry consultant for a private forestry and timber company that became known as Softwood Holdings Ltd. Predeceased by his wife in 1969 and survived by their son, Rodger died on 27 November 1982 at North Plympton, Adelaide, and was buried in Centennial Park cemetery.

Citation details

Pauline Payne, 'Rodger, Geoffrey James (1894–1982)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/rodger-geoffrey-james-15613/text26816>, published first in hardcopy 2012, accessed online 30 October 2017.

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Additional Biography

As the biography above and the obituary at the end of this document give many details of Geoffrey's life and work, the profile below will mainly add details of Geoffrey's early and University life plus relevant newspaper articles and some comments from a J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection interview with Geoffrey recorded in 1973.

Early Life

Geoffrey James Rodger was born on 4 July 1894 at Kensington, South Australia, eldest child of James Rodger, accountant, and his wife Bridget (Bebe) Mary Agnes, née Murphy.

Schooling

Geoffrey attended Christian Brother's College from at least 1905 and he passed his Junior Examinations there in 1909 followed by Senior Examinations in 1910.

Geoffrey then joined the South Australian Lands Titles Office but saw an opportunity to get into the Forests Department and did so. His father had books on South Australian trees and Geoffrey 'devoured these books at great length'

Adelaide University

Geoffrey commenced studying at Adelaide University in 1912 and he completed his studies in early 1915 with a supplementary examination pass in Inorganic Chemistry. He was awarded his Bachelor of Science in Forestry in April 1915.

University Sport

Football

Geoffrey played football for the Adelaide University B Grade in the Adelaide Students Association and was a member of the team that won the Premiership that year.

1914 Adelaide University B Football Team



G.J Rodger – Front Row - Third from Left

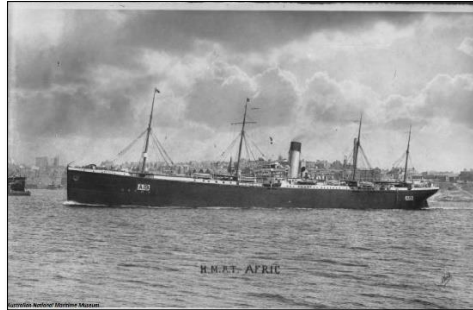
Pre-War Career

After completion of his degree Geoffrey was appointed as an assistant forester at Bundaleer Forest, 9kms south of Jamestown, SA.

World War I

Geoffrey enlisted on the 20th of December 1915, with pay from the 7th of January 1916 (SN 11104). He was 5' 5½" tall and weighed 124 lbs and had a fair complexion, blue eyes and light brown hair. His father was listed as his next-of-kin.

Geoffrey departed Australia as a Driver with the 3rd Divisional Train on the 9th of June 1916 onboard the *HMAT Afric A.19* and arrived at Southampton on the 24th of July 1916.



He then attended officer training at Balliol College, Oxford and was appointed a 2nd Lieutenant with the 25th Battalion on the 1st of March 1917. In mid-March Geoffrey proceeded overseas to France. On the 19th of July Geoffrey was appointed a Lieutenant. Geoffrey was then seconded to the 7th Australian Light trench mortar battery.

Geoffrey received gunshot wounds to the left ear and scalp on the 21st of September 1917, but the wounds appear to have been minor.

In February 1918 the following letter from Geoffrey to his mother was published in the *Barrier Miner (Broken Hill, NSW : 1888 – 1954)*, the letter was dated 8th December 1917.

LIEUTENANT G. J. RODGER.

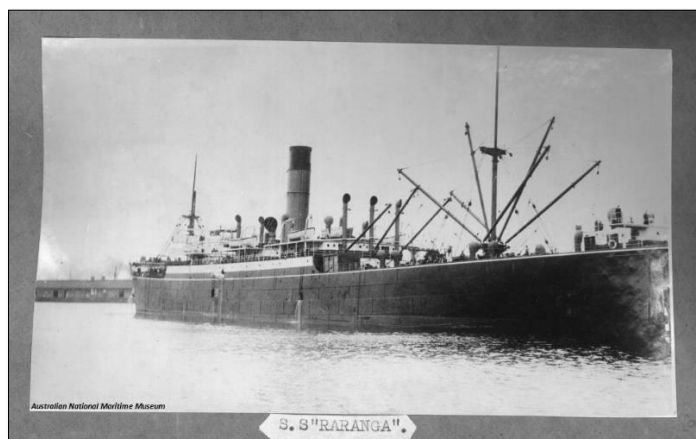
Lieutenant G. J. Rodger, writing to his mother from Belgium under date of December 8 last, says:—

"I have been away for a few days from the battery attendance. I have been attending a course in the Australian Flying Corps, and had a great time. We were given comfortable beds and good quarters. We were asked many questions about the machines after we had been given time to examine them. We were then given a flight each, and I can tell you the ride was greatly enjoyed. Some of the boys got sick while in the air, but it did not affect me. We rose to a height of 7000ft., and then flew about the country at 90 miles an hour. We did some wonderful turns, spirals, dives, etc. Below was quite a good deal of France and Belgium, and one could get news of both sides of the front lines. The pilot was not allowed to take us over the enemy's country. I was in the observer's seat. We had to be content with flying over our own lines. All I could see of Fritz's country was a few trains puffing about in the distance. Of course, on our side we could see nearly everything. We could discern roads, rivers, railways, forests, houses, and at times could see the troops moving about. Several motor lorries which were strung out along the road were very visible. On the whole the scene

resembled a beautiful picture. The prettiest sight of all was when we were right above the clouds and sailing towards the sun. The sun is much brighter and more silvery in its beams up above than it appears from earth. I could write pages about the ride, and then I could not describe the sensation adequately. It is close to Christmas now, so I thought I would write this short note, as one never knows when he is going to write the next. I am in a fairly decent little galvanised iron shed at the side of a trench. We are at present right on the lines, but are not having a bad time, as everything is very quiet. We have not had a shell closer than 20 yards since we have been in this part. Night time is the worst. The artillery on both sides then seems to suddenly take a great dislike to each other, and off they go at it, hammer and tongs. But it does not last long, and 'Fritz' usually gets a lot more shells than we do. The weather is getting colder. There was a heavy frost this morning, and also a dense fog, in which we can walk about on our parapet without being observed. I expect to go back to headquarters in a day or two, and will be spending Christmas in a perfectly shell-proof dug-out. So should have a good time."

Geoffrey did not return home immediately after the cessation of hostilities, instead he undertook employment which the authorities called 'non-military employment', with the British Forestry Commission and studied their forests and their working plans as requested by the Commission. Geoffrey commented that the soldiers call this work 'non-military enjoyment'.

Geoffrey returned to Australia onboard the SS *Raranga* which departed from England on the 8th of September 1919. Geoffrey was transferred to the Reserve of Officers in 1922.



Career

After WWI, Geoffrey went to New South Wales as a forest assessor on the south coast in New South Wales and on the Southern Highlands. In his own words 'I rode from Tobago on the South Coast up through over the mountains at Kybeyan through the trackless natural forests and the unmarked high summer plains on to Cooma. From Cooma I went by road then to Adaminaby to Kiandra down the Talbingo Hill to Tumut. From Tumut out to Mecalong. Total distance of about 200 miles.'

Geoffrey made the following comments about working in Tasmania:- 'there were no roads there at all and you had to go by train to Queenstown. From Queenstown I got a horse and I rode out east into the mountains making my examinations as I went because I was -employed by the Development of Migration Commission to report on the Tasmanian forests and the reorganisation of the forest service.'

1935

CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS

**Mr. G. J. Rodger, Of N.S.W.,
Appointed**

FORMER ADELAIDE MAN

Following a personal interview which the Minister of Afforestation (Mr. Ritchie) had in Sydney last week with the senior officer of the New South Wales Forestry Commission (Mr. Geoffrey J. Rodger), Executive Council yesterday appointed Mr. Rodger Conservator of Forests for South Australia at a salary of £640 a year, in succession to Mr. Julius, who left the service in January last on reaching the retiring age.

Mr. Rodger was one of several who applied for the position, and his qualifications and experience so impressed Mr. Ritchie that when he was in Melbourne last week he decided to go on to Sydney to discuss forestry problems with Mr. Rodger. Mr. Rodger is a South Australian, having been born at Kensington 40 years ago. He is the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Rodger, of Dulwich. He was educated at Christian Brothers' College, and took the degree of Bachelor of Science in forestry at the Adelaide University in 1915, when he was appointed assistant forester at Bundaieer. Shortly afterwards he went abroad with the A.I.F., and saw war service until the conclusion of hostilities. During periods of leave he inspected French and Belgian forests, and on being demobilised he was attached in 1919 for three months to the Forestry Authority of Great Britain. In this capacity he gained experience in silviculture and forest management.

Returning to South Australia he resumed his connection with the Forestry Department, but resigned shortly afterwards to accept an appointment with the New South Wales Forestry Commission which he retained until May, 1924. Seeking wider experience he then took the position of senior divisional forest officer in Western Australia, and remained there until March, 1926. The Federal Government next secured his services, and he became chief forester in the Federal Capital Territory until August, 1928. In 1927 he was loaned to the Tasmanian Government to survey its forest resources and prepare plans for the reorganisation of the forest services of that State.

In August, 1928, he became chief working plans officer for the New South Wales Forestry Commission, and became senior officer of the Commission in 1931.

Mr. Rodger, who is married, and has one child, will arrive in Adelaide within a few weeks.

"South Australia Fortunate"

SYDNEY April 11.

The Inspector-General of Forests for the Commonwealth (Mr. C. E. Lane Poole), who is on sick leave in Sydney, said tonight that South Australia was very fortunate to obtain the services of Mr. Rodger, who was a forester whose work, both in administrative and executive capacities, was of a very high order.

1935



G.J Rodger

1939 – Forest Officers Conference



G.J Rodger – Far Right

World War II

Geoffrey was 47 years of age and living at 38 Lynington St, Tusmore, SA on the 25th March 1942 when he enlisted in the A Coy, 3rd Battalion of the Volunteer Defence Corps.(SN S69586). He was appointed a Lieutenant and was discharged on the 26th October 1944.

103.
VDC JAN 1942
AUSTRALIAN



MILITARY FORCES.

MOBILIZATION ATTESTATION FORM

To be filled in for all Persons at the Place of Assembly when called out under Parts III. or IV. of the Defence Act.

Army No. S. 69586.
Surname RODGER (BLOCK CAPITALS) Christian Names Geoffrey James
Unit A. Coy. 3 BN VDC
Enlisted for war service at Adelaide (Place)
S.A. (State) 25th March 1942 (Date)

A
Questions to be put to persons called out or presenting themselves for enlistment.*

1. What is your name? } 1. Surname RODGER
(BLOCK CAPITALS)
Other names Geoffrey James
2. Where were you born? } 2. In or near the town of Adelaide
In the state or country of South Australia.
3. Are you a British Subject? } 3. Yes.
4. What is your age and date of birth? } 4. Age 47 years.
Date of Birth 4/7/1894.
5. (a) What is your normal trade or occupation? Grade if any? } 5. (a) Conservator of Forests.
(b) Present occupation? } (b) " " "
6. (a) Are you married, single or widower? } 6. (a) Married.
(b) If married state date of marriage? } (b) 9/11/1928.
7. (a) Have you had previous naval, military or Air Force service } 7. (a) A.I.F. 1915-1919.
either in peace or war? If so, where and in what arm? } (b) On Reserve of Officers still
(b) What was the reason for your discharge? }
8. Who is your actual next of kin? (Order of relationship.— } 8. Name A. V. Rodger
wife, eldest son, eldest daughter, father, mother, eldest } Address "
brother, eldest sister, eldest half-brother, eldest half-sister) } Relationship wife
9. What is your permanent address? } 9. 38 Lynnington St. Tusmore
S.A. Australia.
10. What is your religious denomination? (This question need not } 10. R. C.
be answered if the man has a conscientious objection to }
doing so) }
11. Which, if any, of the following Educational Qualifications do } 1. Certificate for entry to Secondary School
you possess? } 2. Intermediate Junior Public.
3. Leaving Senior Public.
4. Leaving Honours
5. Technical
6. University Degree Bachelor of Science.
7. Other Diplomas in Forestry.
12. Have you ever been convicted by a Civil Court? } 12. No.
If so—(a) What Court? } (a) "
(b) for what offence? } (b) "

I, Geoffrey James Rodger do solemnly declare that the
above answers made by me to the above questions are true.
Witnessed by A. B. Mars (Signature of Attesting or Witnessing Officer.)
G. Rodger Signature.

* The person will be warned that should he give false answers to any of these questions he will be liable to heavy penalties under the Defence Acts.



Mr. G. J. Rodger

Big Forestry Job Likely For S.A. Official

CANBERRA.—The appointment of the S.A. Conservator of Forests (Mr. G. J. Rodger) as Commonwealth Director-General of the Forestry and Timber Bureau is expected to be announced soon.

The bureau will be an entirely new office, and will function under the Department of the Interior.

Mr. Rodger is recognised in Canberra as having outstanding qualifications for the position.

qualifications for the position. This prompted the Prime Minister (Mr. Chifley) to ask the S.A. Government to co-operate by releasing Mr. Rodger.

In view of the importance of the position, it is not expected that the State Government will oppose the release, although it realises the fine work Mr. Rodger has done in South Australia since he became Conservator of Forests in May, 1935.

£1,300 SALARY ?

It is understood that the new position will carry a salary of about £1,300 a year.

Mr. Rodger, who is 50, is a South Australian having been born at Kensington. He took the degree of Bachelor of Science in forestry at the Adelaide University in 1915.

He served with the A.I.F. and during leave periods inspected French and Belgian forests. On being demobilised he was attached for three months in 1919 to the Forestry Authority of Great Britain.

Returning to Australia Mr. Rodger resumed with the Forestry Department, but soon accepted an appointment with the New South Wales Forestry Commission. In 1924 he took an appointment as senior divisional forest officer in Western Australia. He remained there for two years before becoming Chief Forester in the Federal Capital territory.

In 1928 Mr. Rodger went back to a higher post with the New South Wales Forestry Commission, and remained there until 1935, when he accepted his Adelaide appointment.

May 1946



March 1949 – Forestry Conference



G.J. Rodger – Fifth from Left

June 1954
Royal Commission on the WA Timber Industry



G.J. Rodger – At Right

September 1954
Royal Commission on the WA Timber Industry



G.J. Rodger – At Left

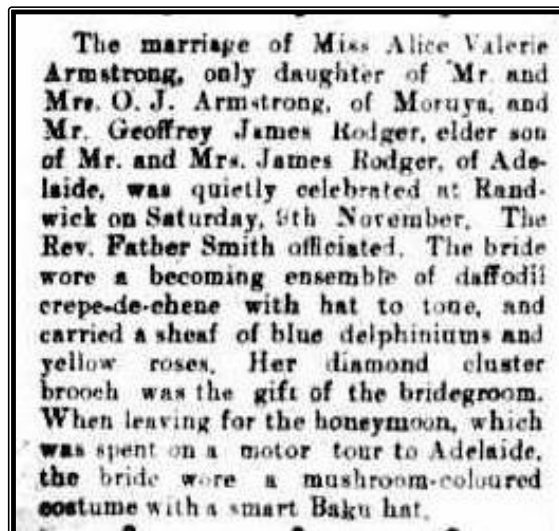
Geoffrey considered one of his finest achievements was 'getting the heads of the other forest services to join me in meetings - in regular meetings - at least once a year, sometimes more often. We got rid of that parochialism which was tending to pervade the forest services in those days.' He also had the opportunity to represent Australian forestry overseas in Denmark at the second FAO conference and he was able to visit Norway and Sweden. He also visited Rome with the first eucalypt conference, which he chaired, and attended an Asia Pacific conference, a section of FAO.



G.J. Rodger
(date unknown)

Family Life

On the 9th of November 1929, Geoffrey married Alice Valerie Armstrong the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. O.J. Armstrong of Moruya, NSW. A Son, John Geoffrey Rodger, was born in 1931.



On his retirement in 1959 Rodger returned to South Australia with his wife and son, becoming a director and forestry consultant for a private forestry and timber company that became known as Softwood Holdings Ltd.

Death

Geoffrey's wife, Alice Valerie Rodger passed away in 1969. Geoffrey James Rodger passed away on the 27th of December 1982, in Adelaide, South Australia, at the age of 88 and was buried in Centennial Park cemetery.

Obituary Geoffrey James Rodger

by Brian Herbert Bednall

A host of friends and acquaintances throughout British Commonwealth forestry circles will be saddened to learn of the passing of Geoffrey James Rodger on 27 December 1982, in Adelaide, South Australia, at the age of 88.

G. J. Rodger's forestry career started in 1915 when he obtained his degree from the University of Adelaide, at that time the only School of Forestry in Australia.

He joined the Woods and Forests Department in South Australia but almost immediately afterwards he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces, gaining his commission in France. After the armistice, he gained forestry experience in Britain, Belgium and France with what was then known as the Interim Forest Authority, and eventually returned to Australia late in 1919.

He began work as Assistant District Forester with the New South Wales Forestry Commission in the South Coast District, but later moved to Western Australia as the Senior Divisional Forester responsible for the jarrah and karri forests. In 1926, he was appointed to establish a forest service in the Australian Capital Territory and as its first Chief Forester he was based in Canberra, the national capital. During the two years of this assignment he was seconded by the Commonwealth Government, on behalf of the Development and Migration Commission, to report on forests and forestry resources in Tasmania.

In 1928, he returned to New South Wales where he was appointed Chief Working Plans Officer in the Forestry Commission, where he was second in rank to the Commissioner. It is worthy of note that in the period 1928 to 1935, and without any other professional assistance, he achieved an annual rate of about 2 000 hectares in the establishment of plantations of exotic species, mostly pines.

In 1935, he was appointed Conservator of Forests in South Australia, where he had additional responsibilities in controlling the operations of the two state-owned sawmills (huge by the standards of those days) in the South-east of that State.

He acted as Controller of Timber for South Australia during the Second World War.

In 1946, Geoffrey Rodger was appointed Director-General of Forests, the senior position in Australian forestry, where he worked for long hours well beyond the course of duty, serving on many committees overseeing the post-war expansion of the Australian forestry industries.

Commencing in 1950, Rodger chaired the Forests and Forest Products Sub-committee which advised the National FAO Advisory Committee to the Commonwealth Government. A significant development of this group was the sponsorship of the Eucalyptus Study Tour in 1952 and the subsequent FAO-UN World Eucalyptus Conference in Rome in 1956 of which G. J. Rodger was elected Chairman.

He will probably be remembered by the Australian forest services for his complete success in healing the rifts that had developed between the services before his appointment.

In 1951, he was twice appointed as a Royal Commissioner to enquire into various forestry practices in Western Australia.

He was instrumental in the formation of the Australian Forestry Council and the then Forest Research Institute at Canberra, and they bear full witness to his increasing efforts to assist the cause of forestry in Australia.

In 1954, he was Chairman of the 4th Australian Fire Control Conference, which was a landmark in Australian fire research history. The principal areas for co-ordinated fire research within the Forestry and Timber Bureau were set out in six major recommendations of this meeting: fire behaviour, fire weather, publicity, use of aircraft, type of training and, in addition, the need for periodic conferences for the exchange of information.

British Commonwealth forestry old-timers will remember his leadership of the Australian delegation at the Empire Forestry Conference in London in 1947, and also his chairmanship of the Commonwealth Forestry Conference in Australia and New Zealand in 1957.

He retired on 8 December 1959, and then became a director and forestry consultant to a large South Australian timber company, where he was especially concerned with silviculture and utilisation.

In the late seventies, as the toll of the years became apparent, he lived quietly at home but continued several forestry friendships of very long standing, until declining health led him to enter a nursing home just a year or so before his death.

Geoffrey Rodger was the last surviving founder member of the Institute. He served as the member representing South Australia on the first Council, before the formation of Divisions, in 1937–38. He was elected to be an Honorary Member in 1966.

He was a fearless fighter for forestry, a down-to-earth man who could evaluate his many problems with common sense, without making an enemy.

His passing is a distinct loss to world forestry.

Family Legacy

Geoffrey and Alice's son, John Geoffrey Rodger (b 1931 – d 2018), attended Rostrevor College and Adelaide University, graduating with a Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical) in 1953. Retiring in 1993, he was at the time a principal research scientist with the Department of Defence, Salisbury. He had started his career with the Weapons Research Establishment, Research and Development Branch, Salisbury, South Australia, as a scientific officer in 1956. He served the local Salisbury/Paralowie community as a long-time member and Past District Governor of the Lions Service Club.

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

Sources and Acknowledgements:

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Rob O'Shannassy AUFC/AUCC WW1 Researcher

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