

CENTRAL DISTRICT FC HERITAGE COMMITTEE - BIOG. NO.73

SAMUEL BRAMBLEY "BRAM" LANG

DOB: 14.01.1924

Written: 19.10.2019

Information for this biography of the late Samuel Brambley "Bram" Lang was provided by his eldest son, also Samuel "Sam" Brambley Lang, who currently lives in Canberra. It has been family tradition that the eldest son through the generations be named after the father - so that Bram Lang's grandfather, his father, Bram Lang himself, his eldest son, Sam Lang and Sam's eldest son are all named Samuel Brambley Lang.

ANZAC Day, the 25th April, 1959 was also a most significant day for the new Central District Football Club. That was the day that Centrals played their first games in the SANFL competition, against Woodville Football Club on Woodville Oval, for premiership points. The under 17's under the Captaincy of John Ewens of Two Wells had a win, the under 19's played a draw and the senior side, under the leadership of John Delo, lost 13.8 to 5.8.

Bram Lang was one of the "lucky" lads who played in that first match, for although they didn't win the game, or any in fact in the first season, those twenty young blokes names would go down in CDFC history as the "first". Another interesting fact is that Bram was thirty-five years of age when that first game was played. It seems that Charlie Pyatt had selected a number of older chaps, rugged, with a lot of life experience to provide some leadership and protection for a host of young players in the side. Some of those older fellows were John Delo, Eric Robins, Brian Huppertz and Tom Adams, with the younger blokes including the Clark boys, Des and Dean, from Gawler South, Trevor Jackman, Tony Crafter, Geoff Daly and Murray Thompson.

The Lang family were of Cornish origin and on arrival in South Australia they took up farm land in the north of the State near Crystal Brook – Caltowie and further north in the Orroroo – Wilmington area. Bram's parents had property at a little place called Morchard, which is perhaps ten or so kilometres west of Orroroo, and he told stories of sewing wheat bags for pocket money, helping with the shearing, slaughtering sheep and long walks to the local school as a small boy.

When junior school finished and it was time to go to senior school Bram, as the eldest son, was bundled off to Adelaide by his father to board and attend Adelaide Boys High School. He was an excellent student and showed leadership qualities from a young age at ABHS. In 1940 at sixteen years of age he was a First 11 cricketer and Captain of the ABHS First 18 Football team coached by Magarey Medallist and ABHS teacher, Jeff Pash.

With his schooling completed and World War 2 now in full swing Bram volunteered for the Royal Australian Air Force - "In July, 1942, trainee pilot Samuel Brambley Lang went solo in a DH 82 Tiger Moth at Parafield airport, SA. He graduated from RAAF Uranquinty Advanced Training Squadron before his nineteenth birthday. (Uranquinty is just south of Wagga Wagga and Kapooka in NSW.) Then it was off to England via Canada. Bram spent his first twelve months towing targets from some of the most beautiful airfields in the Cotswolds and Wales. Conversion to fighters like Hurricanes and Spitfires would come when he was moved from England to the Sinai."

"He moved through Cairo and Naples on his way back to England and ended up back at RAF Chedworth, converting onto Hawker Typhoon ground attack aircraft. Warrant Officer Samuel Brambley Lang had just turned twenty-one years of age.

The Hawker family of WW2 and post – WW2 fighter aircraft included the Hawker Hurricane, Hawker Tornado, Hawker Typhoon, Hawker Tempest, Hawker Fury and culminating with the Hawker Sea Fury, one of the most powerful and fastest propellor driven aircraft ever produced.

183 SQN RAF, flying Typhoons, moved to Normandy soon after D-Day and was used to support the Army, attacking enemy tanks and transport in the battle area. On 20 August the Squadron, along with aircraft from three other Squadrons, helped to defeat a German panzer counter-attack near Chambois, relieving pressure on the Polish Armoured Brigade.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander, said of the Typhoons, “the chief credit in smashing the enemy’s spearhead, however, must go to the rocket firing Typhoon aircraft of the Second Tactical Air Force The result of the strafing was that the enemy attack was effectively brought to a halt, and a threat was turned into a great victory.”

“With the grand total of 430 flying hours and 25 hours on Typhoons, on 24th March, 1945 Bram was deployed to 183 SQN, RAF, 2nd Tactical Air Force in the forward battle area in Holland.

Malden Air Base (also known as ALG, Allied Landing Ground, B-91 Kluis, in Dutch: Vliegveld Malden or Vliegveld ‘De Kluis’) was an Allied landing ground near Nijmegen. The airfield was constructed in just a few days by the British 23rd Airfield Construction Group in March, 1945. It was in use from 21 March, 1945 until 20 April, 1945. In mid-April, 1945 183 SQN, 2nd TAF moved from Holland to Germany and continued to attack German communications and provide close support on the battlefield to the end of the war.

Bram was shot down on 01 April, 1945. He was posted as “Missing Believed Killed” but in fact was captured and was a POW for five weeks before being liberated by Allied Forces. He had conducted three successful missions and was shot down on the fourth. His subsequent logbook entry reads as follows:

“Hit by 20mm flak at about 800 feet and pulled up into cloud, base 1000ft. Came out, again hit and fire started behind seat. Engine cut and crash landed ahead. Straps undone, knocked out.”

Horst Weber, an SS panzergrenadier serving with Kampfgruppe Knaust south of Arnhem (Holland) in the later stages of Operation Market Garden, recalled that, during a battle with British 43rd Wessex Division on 23 September, 1944, ‘we had four Tiger tanks and three Panther tanks.....We were convinced that we would gain another victory here, that we would smash the enemy forces. But then Typhoons dropped these rockets on our tanks and shot all seven to bits. And we cried..... We would see two black dots in the sky and that always meant rockets. Then the rockets would hit the tanks which would burn. The soldiers would come out all burnt and screaming with pain.’

The fire-power of a Hawker Typhoon’s sixteen rockets could do as much damage as a broadside from a naval destroyer of the time.

As previously stated Bram was a very good student at Adelaide Boys High School and on graduating he had aspirations of becoming a school teacher. Before joining the RAAF in 1942 he taught at Kapunda High School as a student teacher and that is when he first met the girl, Irene, who would later become his wife.

After the war Bram completed his teacher training and gained a Degree. He re-joined the RAAF in 1956 as an Education Officer and was posted to RAAF Edinburgh. Bram, meanwhile had married Irene and started a family. They would have three boys, Sam, Ted and Bill, and from them seven grand-children and four great-grand-children. They bought one of the first houses in Elizabeth, No.23 Goodman Road, located on the south-eastern corner of Goodman Road and Ridley Road, straight across from Elizabeth Oval.

This was around the corner from Norm Russell's original semi-detached home and chemist shop. A couple of houses in the other direction along Ridley Road was the home of Tom Croxton, one of the CDFC "founding five" and the first Chairman of the Club. The eldest of Bram's boys, Sam, was now about ten years old and he remembers Tom Croxton and his Dad regularly visiting each other. It was also in Tom and Nell Croxton's home that young Sam first saw television.

Bram had always loved his sport and the RAAF expected their men at that time to be fit. He obliged by playing all sports, everywhere and anytime he could. As a footballer, for his several years at Kapunda after the war, he was variously Captain/Coach, Captain and Vice-Captain of the Kapunda Football Club and he played in the 1952 and 1953 premierships teams. (See Footnote 1)

Bram was thirty-two years old when he re-joined the RAAF in 1956. He played a lot of inter-Service football against teams from the Army, the Fire Brigade and the Police Force. As mentioned, he played in Central District FC's first year, appearing in the best players on many occasions and completing seventeen of a possible eighteen games in that season.

At the end of 1959 having completed his three year posting at RAAF Edinburgh, Bram and his family left South Australia and all of them down to the grand-children now live in Canberra, NSW and Queensland. His next posting was to RAAF Richmond in NSW for a year, then on to RAAF Butterworth, Malaysia for two years followed by RAAF Amberley in Queensland for three years. When at Amberley and in his mid-forties he played his final years as a senior footballer in first grade for Ipswich FC in the Brisbane League.

Bram was also an accomplished cricketer, playing in the UK during and after the war. He also played in Australia, Penang, Singapore and Hong Kong and was a first grade keeper-batsman at representative level. He also enjoyed his golf and in Sam's words "could hit a long ball, but was not too fussy around the greens, except during a tournament".

Bram's final position in the RAAF was as the Commanding Officer of the RAAF School of Languages (effectively the national Government Language school for diplomats and military personnel at that time). With some Bahasa Malay (Malay language) competence from his Butterworth days Bram learnt Indonesian well enough to lecture in Bahasa. He was Commanding Officer of the school for a record nine years, retiring from there as a Wing Commander in 1979.

It was in 1979 that the RAAF School of Languages and the Army Languages Training Wing amalgamated, forming the Defence International Training Centre (DITC). Students and staff of the old RAAF School of Languages still have a facility at RAAF Point Cook where they can reconnect and share stories and photos.

Bram's re-settlement training was enjoyed in Indonesia, where he learnt how to cook Indonesian food, with the plan to open a restaurant. That never happened. His actual retirement job was to completely restore "a fixer-upper" house near Coffs Harbour, NSW. This labour of love kept him fit for two decades.

Irene passed away in 2003 and Bram married his second wife, Norma, at eighty-three years of age. His final residence was in the Linfield Gardens retirement village, Helensvale, QLD, on the Gold Coast as one of the very first occupants.

Bowls then became his sport. Surprise! Surprise!

Bram was driving his car until a few months before he passed on the 17 April, 2019. His 95 long years were lived well. He died peacefully with little struggle and much grace. He knew what was coming. Amongst his last words to his sons were: "It's time to put the beer down and move on".

Bram's son, Sam, flew from Canberra with Bram's ashes and they were interred at the Kapunda Cemetery with Irene's ashes. His war service is commemorated in the Garden of Remembrance, Centennial Park Cemetery, Pasadena, South Australia.

Footnote 1

"While taking Dad's ashes to Kapunda for interment, I found the book, "First Use of the Ball: Celebrating Football in Kapunda Since 1866" by Paul McCarthy, printed by Openbook Howden, SA. Quite an impressive book and Dad gets a guernsey!"

Footnote 2

Some notes from my original research:

A fellow by the name of B. Lang played 17 games for CDFC in its' first year, 1959. Geoff Daly thought that his Christian name might have been something like Bram. Then while having contact with Bob Anderson in Perth, who also played in that first year, he mentioned that Bram Lang was an officer in the RAAF at Edinburgh. However, despite contacting RAAF Edinburgh, I could get no further in my search.

Then, in early 2019, there was a piece in the Sunday Mail stating that there would be a "Lang family reunion" at Thorndon Park, Hamilton Tce, Paradise on March 17, 2019

Contact person: Helen 0447.364.424

I contacted Helen and she very kindly offered to circulate an email to her Lang contacts asking if any of them could help with information on Bram Lang, but nothing came to light. I left it there and went in other directions.

Then, while reading a book titled "The Pash Papers", there is a photo on Page 19 of the Adelaide High School football team in 1940, coached by teacher, Jeff Pash, and captained by Brambley Lang. The caption underneath reads:

"This Adelaide High School team was coached in 1940 by the previous year's Magarey Medallist. Jeff Pash coached many fine schoolboy players and some who became excellent league footballers but I doubt that he coached better than Colin Churchett." The photo is taken from the Adelaide High School Magazine, December, 1940"

The next step was to google "Brambley Lang" and up came a lot of information including the following funeral notice:

LANG, SAMUEL BRAMBLEY "BRAM"

Wing Commander (retired) LANG, Samuel Brambley "Bram"

Passed away peacefully on the Gold Coast on the 17th April 2019.

Much loved Husband of Norma and Irene (dec). Loving father of Sam, Ted (dec) and Bill. Father in law of Pam, Jen, Deb and their families.

Bram's family and friends are invited to attend the celebration of his life to be held in the Somerville Chapel, 129 Nerang-Broadbeach Rd, Nerang on Tuesday 30th April 2019 at 12.30pm. In lieu of flowers donations to Legacy would be appreciated.

Notice

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Further on the internet, this may have been his father, but I think not.

Our Bram would have been thirteen years of age at the time of this occurrence.

From the Port Pirie Recorder, dated 12 April, 1937:

"FARMER FOUND DEAD IN SHED

TRAGEDY OF LAURA DISTRICT RESIDENT

SHOTGUN FOUND BY HIS WIFE BESIDE THE BODY

Caltowie, Sunday

Mr. Samuel Brambley Lang (about 44), farmer, of between Caltowie and Laura, was found dead on Saturday morning in a shed at his homestead.

A shotgun was lying at the side of the body when it was discovered by his wife.

Mr. Lang, who was born and bred at Caltowie, was a highly respected farmer in the district between that town and Laura and nearer the latter town.

About 10 o'clock on Saturday morning he left the house and went down to the sheds. Less than half an hour later Mrs. Lang went to one of the buildings and saw the body of her husband.

Dr. T. W. Tassie and Mounted – Constable McLean, of Laura, were sent for, and on arrival the doctor said that life was extinct.

The funeral took place at Caltowie today, and was attended by a large number of residents. Mr. Lang, who was a member of the Masonic Lodge, had many friends, to whom the news of his tragic death was a severe shock.

A widow and two sons and a daughter are left. The three children are of school-going age."

Samuel Brambley Lang who died on the 10.04.1937, aged 44 years, is buried at Caltowie Cemetery, 42 Cemetery Road (via Stone Hut – Caltowie Road), Caltowie, SA."

Next, I successfully searched the electoral roll for a Sam Lang on the Gold Coast and took pot luck in sending off an explanatory letter to that address. I received nothing for a couple of months and thought I had missed out again. But then I was having lunch with some of my old work mates at the Flagstaff Hotel at Darlington and I had a call on my mobile phone from a Sam Lang.

In quite a long conversation he explained that he was Sam Lang, the son of the Samuel Brambley Lang I was seeking, but I had sent the letter to his son, also Samuel Brambley Lang. Sam, the son on the Gold Coast, had been good enough to send my letter on to his father, Samuel Brambley Lang, in Canberra. We then had a number of emails back and forth and I was able to put together the biography above.

This is such an interesting project and I have had the pleasure of presenting this story to a quarterly meeting of the SANFL archives group held at Adelaide Oval, where it was warmly received. I still have to gain access to a copy of "First Use Of The Ball - Celebrating Football in Kapunda since 1866" and hope to add a little more detail to the story.

A copy of the book has since been purchased directly from Mr Paul McCarthy.