



Major Douglas Herman CANNAN

[1880 – 1915]



15th Infantry Battalion

The then Captain Cannan was Honorary Secretary of the Club in 1914

Douglas Herman Cannan was born in Townsville on 14 April 1880, the third of five children to John Kearsey Cannan and Elizabeth Christian Cannan (nee Hodgson). The family moved around Queensland due to his father's career as a bank officer, and the children were born in various locations (Roma, Warwick, Ipswich and Townsville).

Cannan attended Queensland State School and then Brisbane Grammar School before building a successful career. By 1914 he was a Fellow of the Queensland Institute of Accountants and was Secretary and Manager of the Metropolitan Fish Market Board.

We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.

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Cannan never married, but in addition to his militia service, he had a wide range of interests; his name appeared frequently in the press as he rowed, sailed, played tennis and represented Queensland in lacrosse.

He served in the militia prior to the Great War, in 9th and then 8th Infantry Regiments. He was appointed Lieutenant in January 1904 and promoted to Captain in October 1912.

He joined the AIF and was appointed as Captain, 15th Battalion on 23 September 1914, landing at ANZAC late in the afternoon of 25 April 1915.

Cannan was serving during the desperate fighting at Quinn's Post where the opposing lines were as close as six yards apart. He was part of the unsuccessful attack on the Turkish trenches in front of Quinn's Post on the night of 9/10 May.

He was promoted Temporary Major on 11 July 1915.

Three months later, 4th Brigade was ordered to capture Hill 971 on the night of 6/7 August. After some initial success, about 4.15 am and still well short of the start point for its assault, the battalion began to suffer heavy casualties from the withering fire of eight Turkish machine guns. Shortly after, a general retirement of the brigade was ordered and all but five officers of 15th Battalion were killed or wounded.

Cannan was originally reported as wounded and missing but was later reported as killed in action on 8 August 1915 near Abdul Rahman ridge. He was one of the 12 USC members killed in action at Gallipoli and the most senior of the four of those who were in 15th Battalion.

His remains were never recovered.

His name is inscribed on the Lone Pine Memorial at Gallipoli.



Note: He is recorded on that memorial as captain as that was his substantive rank, i.e. his promotion on 11 July 1915 was to Temporary Major (not substantive major).

Sources included:

- Australian War Memorial
- National Archives of Australia
- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents