

= John Northcott =

Lieutenant General Sir John Northcott KCMG , KCVO , CB , KStJ ( 24 March 1890 ? 4 August 1966 ) was an Australian Army general who served as Chief of the General Staff during the Second World War , and commanded the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in the Occupation of Japan . He was the first Australian @-@ born Governor of New South Wales .

Northcott joined the Australian Army as a reservist in 1908 , before becoming a regular officer in 1912 . On duty in Tasmania when the Great War broke out in 1914 , he joined the 12th Infantry Battalion , a unit from that state . He was wounded in the landing at Gallipoli on Anzac Day and invalided to Egypt , the United Kingdom , and ultimately Australia , taking no further part in the fighting . After the war , Northcott served on a series of staff posts . He attended the Staff College , Camberley and Imperial Defence College and also spent time overseas as an exchange officer with the British Army and as a military attaché in the United States and Canada .

During World War II , Northcott was attached to the British 7th Armoured Division in the Middle East to study armoured warfare , returning to Australia in December 1941 to organise the new 1st Armoured Division . In March 1942 , he assumed command II Corps . In September 1942 , he was appointed Chief of the General Staff . As General Sir Thomas Blamey 's principal non @-@ operational subordinate , he was responsible for administering and training the wartime army . After the war , he served as commander of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in the post @-@ war Occupation of Japan . He retired from the Army in 1946 to become the Governor of New South Wales .

= = Early life = =

John Northcott was born on 24 March 1890 at Creswick , Victoria , the eldest son of a storekeeper , John Northcott , and his wife Elizabeth Jane , née Reynolds . Northcott was educated at Dean State School , Grenville College , Ballarat and the University of Melbourne . While at school , he served in the Australian Army Cadets . He was commissioned as second lieutenant in the 9th Light Horse , a Militia unit , on 14 August 1908 , and was promoted to lieutenant on 31 October 1910 and captain on 31 July 1911 . On 16 November 1912 , he was granted a commission as a lieutenant in the Administrative and Instructional Staff of the regular forces , then known as the Permanent Military Forces ( PMF ) , retaining the rank of honorary captain until he was promoted to that rank in the PMF on 1 June 1918 .

= = First World War = =

Northcott was assigned to staff of the 6th Military District , the military district covering the state of Tasmania , where he was serving when the First World War broke out in August 1914 . His initial task was assisting with the raising of Australian Imperial Force ( AIF ) units in Tasmania . He joined the AIF as a lieutenant on 24 August 1914 and was appointed adjutant of the 12th Infantry Battalion , which was forming at Anglesea Barracks near Hobart . He was promoted to captain in the AIF on 18 October 1914 .

Northcott embarked for Egypt from Hobart with the 12th Infantry Battalion on the transport A2 , HMAT Geelong on 20 October 1914 . This was one of the first battalions ashore in the landing at Anzac Cove on the first Anzac Day , 25 April 1915 . Northcott 's part in the battle was brief , for that day he was wounded in the chest by a Turkish bullet . He lay amongst a pile of dead bodies until the evening , when he was found to be alive . He was evacuated to Alexandria and later to England . While recuperating , he was joined by his fiancée , Winifred Mary Paton , who had travelled to England to be with him . The two were married at the parish church in Oxted on 14 September 1915 . He returned to Australia on 30 December 1915 and took no further part in the fighting , it being " a rigid rule that no regular officer once invalided to Australia could again go overseas " . His AIF appointment was terminated on 30 September 1916 and he was posted to the 5th Military District , the military district covering the state of Western Australia .

= = Between the wars = =

Northcott was granted the honorary rank of major on 1 January 1919 , and the brevet rank on 1 January 1920 , but this was not made substantive until 1 October 1923 . He attended the Staff College , Camberley from 1924 to 1926 . On returning to Australia , Northcott served as Staff Officer , and later Director , Stores and Transport , at Army Headquarters in Victoria Barracks , Melbourne . He was appointed a Member ( fourth class ) of the Royal Victorian Order on 8 July 1927 for coordinating the transport for the 1927 six @-@ month Royal Tour of the Duke and Duchess of York ( later George VI and Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother ) that year to open the Old Parliament House , Canberra .

Northcott served on the staff of the 4th Division from 17 September 1931 to 31 January 1932 and then with the 3rd Division from 1 February to 22 November 1932 . He returned to England as an exchange officer with the British Army , where he served the staff of the 44th ( Home Counties ) Infantry Division . He attended the Imperial Defence College in 1935 . He was one of only six Australian Army officers to attend this prestigious course between 1928 and 1939 , the others being John Lavarack , Henry Wynter , Vernon Sturdee , Sydney Rowell and William Bridgeford . Frederick Shedden , later Secretary of the Department of Defence , also attended this course . Northcott was given the brevet rank of lieutenant colonel on 1 July 1935 , which was made substantive on 1 January 1936 . He attended the Senior Officers ' School at Sheerness in 1936 , and was seconded to the Committee of Imperial Defence . He then served as an Australian defence attaché in the United States and Canada from September 1936 to June 1937 . He was promoted to the brevet rank of colonel on 1 July 1937 and substantive rank on 13 October 1939 . He served on the staff of the 4th Division until 1 September 1939 , when he became Director of Military Operations and Intelligence .

= = Second World War = =

Northcott was promoted to the local rank of major general on 13 October 1939 , when he was appointed Deputy Chief of the General Staff . He accompanied Richard Casey to the Dominions ' Conference in London in later that year as his military adviser . For his service as Deputy Chief of the General Staff , he was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath on 1 January 1941 .

On 26 January 1940 , Northcott became acting Chief of the General Staff ( CGS ) following the death of Lieutenant General Ernest Ker Squires . In August , his successor , General Sir Brudenell White , died in an air crash and Lieutenant General Vernon Sturdee succeeded him . The post of commander of the 8th Division thereby became available but Northcott was excluded from consideration because his knowledge was vital to the new CGS . When the commander of the 9th Division , Major General Henry Wynter , fell ill in January 1941 , Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Blamey asked for Northcott to replace him , but Northcott was involved in organising the 1st Armoured Division and the appointment instead went to Brigadier Leslie Morshead .

Northcott joined the Second Australian Imperial Force ( AIF ) as a major general on 1 September 1941 and was given the AIF serial number VX63396 . He was attached to the British 7th Armoured Division in the Middle East to study armoured warfare , returning to Australia in December 1941 to organise the new 1st Armoured Division . The job was a challenging one that some of his subordinates felt that Northcott was not up to , given his lack of command experience . In March 1942 , Northcott found out from The Herald newspaper that he was to be promoted to command II Corps . " This is what they do to me " , was his comment , " just as my first tank is coming down the road " . The new post came with a promotion to the temporary rank of lieutenant general on 6 April 1942 , which became substantive on 12 December 1945 . Northcott was succeeded as commander by Major General Horace Robertson , an officer with a distinguished combat record in the desert .

However , on 10 September 1942 , Northcott was appointed Chief of the General Staff . Formerly , the Army had been controlled by the Military Board . This ceased to function on 30 July 1942 , with its responsibilities being assumed by the Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief , General Blamey . The

Adjutant General , Major General Victor Stantke , the Quartermaster General , Major General James Cannan and the Master @-@ General of the Ordnance , Major General Leslie , who would formerly have been members of the board , now came under the Lieutenant General Administration ( LGA ) , Lieutenant General Henry Wynter . This left the CGS with responsibility for the day @-@ to @-@ day running of the Army . His job also involved liaison with Royal Australian Navy ( RAN ) and the Royal Australian Air Force ( RAAF ) , and he frequently had to represent Blamey in meetings with the Minister for the Army , Frank Forde .

Northcott spent much of his time from 1943 on in a long battle with the government over the number of men and women allocated to the Army . He attempted to do so without Blamey being dragged into a political fight but this proved to be impossible . In September 1944 , the government reduced the Army 's monthly intake of women from 925 to 500 , while it only received 420 out of 4 @, @ 020 men allocated to the three services . Such a meagre allocation was below what the Army needed to maintain its strength , and formations had to be disbanded . Blamey took up the matter with Prime Minister John Curtin , and managed to get a more satisfactory monthly allocation of 1 @, @ 500 men per month out of 3 @, @ 000 allocated to the three services .

The relationship between Northcott as Chief of the General Staff and Blamey as Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief bore some similarities to the one between the RAAF 's Chief of the Air Staff , Air Vice Marshal George Jones , and Air Vice Marshal William Bostock , the commander of the RAAF forces in the field , but Blamey was senior to Northcott , both in rank and in the Army 's command structure . The relationship could still have been a delicate one , but in the event it was characterised by none of the rancour and rivalry that marred the wartime administration of the RAAF . In late 1943 , Blamey sought to appoint Northcott as his deputy , but the government turned down his request , on the advice of General Douglas MacArthur , who did not want another officer who was answerable both to himself and the Australian Government . However , when Blamey travelled to Washington , D.C. and London in April 1944 , he arranged for Northcott to act as Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief in his absence . After Wynter 's death in February 1945 , the post of LGA was abolished and the CGS again became responsible for administration .

= = British Commonwealth Occupation Force = =

At the end of World War II , Sturdee was again invited to become CGS . He made it a condition of his acceptance that Northcott be given the appointment of Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force ( BCOF ) in Japan . Sturdee felt that Northcott had missed out on opportunities for active service through his being CGS and saw the BCOF post as a just reward for that service .

Northcott headed the BCOF from December 1945 until June 1946 . As such , he negotiated the Northcott @-@ MacArthur agreement with General of the Army Douglas MacArthur , which governed the terms and conditions under which the BCOF would occupy part of Japan . The BCOF would serve under American command , with American policy being followed . Northcott was offered , and accepted , the post of Governor of New South Wales in April 1946 . He remained in Japan until June though , because Prime Minister Ben Chifley wanted the changeover to coincide with his own visit to Japan in May , and because he needed to obtain consent of the other governments concerned for the appointment of Lieutenant General Horace Robertson as Northcott 's successor . Northcott 's lack of experience in command once again showed , and his command was again overhauled by Robertson .

= = Governor of New South Wales = =

On 1 August 1946 , Northcott became the first Australian @-@ born , and one of the longest @-@ serving , Governors of New South Wales . As such , he gave patronage and support to many charitable organisations and to youth , church and citizens ' groups . Blamey was unable to secure a knighthood for Northcott for his military service , it being Australian Labor Party policy not to award knighthoods at that time .

In April 1949 Northcott took part in an event of historic importance at Sydney 's famous Australia Hotel , being the venue of the first successful television demonstration in Australia . Northcott was televised in the hotel 's ballroom as he opened the demonstration .

Northcott was made a Knight of the Venerable Order of St John of Jerusalem in December 1946 , a Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George for his services as governor in 1950 , and a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order in 1954 for his work with the Royal Tour of Queen Elizabeth II . He was a freemason who , during his term as governor , was Viceregal Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New South Wales .

Northcott was Administrator of the Commonwealth in the absence of the governor @-@ general from 19 July to 14 December 1951 , and again from 30 July to 22 October 1956 . While occupying that office , he held the honorary rank of general . He was awarded honorary degrees of Doctor of Letters by the University of Sydney in 1952 and the University of New England in 1956 , and Doctor of Science by the New South Wales University of Technology in 1956 . He retired in July 1957 . In April 1964 , Northcott and Forde represented Australia at General MacArthur 's funeral in Washington , D.C.

= = Death and legacy = =

Survived by his two daughters , Sir John died on 4 August 1966 in his home at Wahroonga , New South Wales . He was accorded a state funeral with military honours and was cremated . Like most governors of New South Wales , his papers are in the State Library of New South Wales . In 1968 the Electoral district of Northcott in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly was dedicated in his name and existed until redistribution and abolition in 1999 . In his military career , Northcott was both highly regarded and successful staff officer , as commander of the 1st Armoured Division , II Corps and BCOF he was " noted neither for innovation nor conspicuous success " , especially when compared with Robertson who " possessed the ebullience and flair that Northcott lacked " . While governor , Northcott was patron of the New South Wales Society for Crippled Children . He continued to take an active in its affairs for the rest of his life . In 1995 , this charity changed its name to The Northcott Society in his honour . In 2004 , it became Northcott Disability Services , providing case to people of all ages with disabilities . He is also remembered through Cranbrook School , Sydney by having one of the houses named after him , Northcott House .

He was a long @-@ standing Freemason , and served as Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory .

= = Honours = =

= = = Honorary military appointments = = =

1 August 1946 ? 3 July 1957 : Honorary Air Commodore of No. 22 Squadron , Royal Australian Air Force .

1 August 1946 ? 3 July 1957 : Honorary Colonel of the 1st / 15th Royal New South Wales Lancers .