

= Horace Robertson =

Lieutenant General Sir Horace Clement Hugh Robertson , KBE , DSO (29 October 1894 ? 28 April 1960) was a senior officer in the Australian Army who served in the First World War , the Second World War and the Korean War . He was one of the first graduates of the Royal Military College , Duntroon , to reach the ranks of major general and lieutenant general .

During the First World War , Robertson served with the 10th Light Horse in the Gallipoli Campaign , including the disastrous Battle of the Nek , where much of his regiment was wiped out . He later participated in the Sinai and Palestine Campaign , where he captured a Turkish Army general , and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order .

During the Second World War , Robertson led the 19th Infantry Brigade at the Battle of Bardia and accepted the surrender of the Italian Navy at Benghazi . Later , he commanded the 1st Armoured Division in Western Australia . In the final weeks of the war he commanded troops in the closing stages of the New Britain Campaign and the Aitape ? Wewak campaign . At the end of the war , he accepted the surrender of Japanese Lieutenant General Hataz? Adachi .

Following the war , he commanded the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in the Occupation of Japan and the British Commonwealth Forces Korea in the Korean War . Robertson was a key figure in establishing the Australian Armoured Corps . Its headquarters in Darwin is named Robertson Barracks in his honour .

= = Early life = =

Horace Clement Hugh Robertson was born in Warrnambool , Victoria , on 29 October 1894 , the sixth child of John Robertson , a state school teacher , and his wife Anne née Grey . Horace was educated at a state school in Outtrim , from May 1905 to April 1910 , when he went to The Geelong College . Horace was nicknamed " Red Robbie " by his fellow schoolboys after his hair colour , in contrast to his older brother John , or " Black Robbie " .

In October 1911 Robertson took the entrance examination for the Royal Military College , Duntroon , and was accepted into the second intake of cadets in 1912 . His class was due to be commissioned on 1 January 1916 , but the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 caused it to be graduated early . He was commissioned as a lieutenant in both the Permanent Military Forces (PMF) and the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) on 3 November 1914 .

On 7 November 1914 , Robertson married Jessie Bonnar in a private service at a registry office in Collingwood . The ceremony was kept secret , because at the time junior officers required the Army 's permission to marry , and at age 20 Robertson would not have received it . Later they would claim that they had been married in 1916 . Their marriage produced no children .

= = First World War = =

Major General William Bridges decided that the Duntroon cadets , none of whom had yet finished their training , should be split up and posted to the various units of the AIF as regimental rather than staff officers . Robertson was posted to the 10th Light Horse as its machine @-@ gun officer . He was one of seven members of his class in the 3rd Light Horse Brigade . By the end of August 1915 , three of them would be dead .

The 10th Light Horse was concentrated at Claremont , Western Australia , before departing for the Middle East on the transport Mashobra in February 1915 . After arriving at Alexandria , Egypt , in March 1915 , the regiment moved to Mena Camp near Cairo . In May , the 3rd Light Horse Brigade began moving , without horses , to Gallipoli , preceded by the machine @-@ gun sections , which embarked at Alexandria on 8 May 1915 . At Gallipoli , the machine guns were brigaded together to provide additional firepower . Robertson 's machine guns were in support during the disastrous Battle of the Nek on 7 August 1915 , during which much of the 10th Light Horse became casualties . Afterwards , Robertson was promoted to captain and became second in command of A Squadron . He assumed command of C Squadron on 28 August , and led it in the fighting at Hill 60 the next day

The 10th Light Horse was reorganised after returning to Egypt in January 1916 , and Robertson assumed command of B Squadron , with the AIF rank of major from May 1916 . This was as far as he could go , for Duntroon graduates could not be promoted above major in the AIF . This was the result of an AIF policy aimed at giving them a broad a range of experience , which would benefit the post @-@ war Army , while not allowing an accumulation of young officers of high rank , for whom the reduced post @-@ War Army would not have sufficient posts . His substantive rank remained that of lieutenant ; he would not be promoted to the substantive rank of captain in the PMF until 30 September 1920 , and promotion to major would not come until 1 July 1932 . At the Battle of Magdhaba , his colonel was wounded and Robertson took over command of the 10th Light Horse . He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his actions during this battle . His citation read :

For distinguished and gallant service in the field . He led a mounted charge and was the first officer to enter the enemy 's trenches . He is an officer of exceptional organising and training powers and thoroughly deserves reward .

Robertson 's men took many Turkish prisoners , including a senior officer of engineers who insisted that he would only surrender his sword to the Australian officer in charge . He was disappointed to discover that it was Robertson , a youthful major , but handed it over anyway .

In February 1917 Robertson was attached to the Desert Column as a staff officer . From there , he was sent to staff school in Egypt . However , on 7 March he suffered a broken leg in a riding accident and was hospitalised for two months . He returned to the staff school in May and finally graduated on 17 June . He was then posted to the newly formed Yeomanry Mounted Division as a General Staff Officer (Grade 3) . In March 1918 , he was posted to Headquarters Delta Force in Cairo . This was disbanded in April and Robertson became Deputy Assistant Adjutant General (DAAG) at AIF Headquarters in Cairo . In January 1919 , he became Assistant Adjutant General (AAG) . He returned to Australia in July 1919 . In addition to his Distinguished Service Order , he was twice mentioned in despatches , and awarded the Order of the Nile (4th Class) by the Sultan of Egypt .

= = Between the wars = =

On returning to Australia , Robertson became brigade major in the 7th Light Horse Brigade . In September 1920 he was posted to the staff of the 3rd Military District and then the 2nd Cavalry Division and the 3rd Division . In April 1922 he sat for and passed the entrance examination to the Staff College , Camberley , where his class included Majors Arthur Percival , John Smyth and Georges Vanier , and Lieutenant Colonel Harry Crerar . Robertson eventually became the first Australian to graduate with an A @-@ grade pass .

Afterwards , Robertson went on to attend a series of shorter training courses in Britain . He attended the School of Musketry at Hythe , Kent ; the Machine Gun School at Netheravon , Wiltshire ; the Artillery College at Woolwich ; the Anti @-@ Gas School at Porton Down ; the Anti @-@ Aircraft School at Westerham , Kent ; and the Royal Tank Corps School at Woolwich . He returned to Australia in 1925 to become Chief Instructor at the Small Arms School at Randwick , New South Wales in 1926 . Following the retirement of General Sir Harry Chauvel in 1930 , Robertson was posted to the 7th Infantry Brigade as its brigade major . In 1931 he became brigade major of the 1st Cavalry Brigade in Queensland . He returned to Sydney in February 1934 as General Staff Officer (Grade 2) at the 2nd District Base . In June 1934 , he was appointed Director of Military Art at the Royal Military College , which had been transferred to Victoria Barracks , Sydney , as a cost @-@ cutting measure during the Great Depression . It returned to Canberra in 1937 , and Robertson returned with it .

Robertson was finally breveted as a lieutenant colonel in June 1936 . The rank became substantive in July 1937 . Like other regular officers , Robertson was opposed to the " Singapore strategy " , and therefore to the defence policy of the government of the day , and said so publicly in the British Army Quarterly . Robertson argued for a local defence of Australia by land and air units . The naval

theorist , Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond , responding to Robertson 's arguments in an editorial , pointed out that local defence would fragment the British Empire 's defence effort and could not secure the sea lanes . However , in view of the weakness of the Royal Navy , Richmond was forced to concede that Robertson 's approach was not unreasonable .

= = Second World War = =

= = = Libya = = =

In March 1939 , Robertson was appointed commander of the 7th Military District , which encompassed the Northern Territory . It was his first command since the First World War . He was promoted to the temporary rank of colonel in August 1939 , and this became substantive in November . The job involved cooperation with the Royal Australian Navy and Royal Australian Air Force , and the administration of a company of regular soldiers known as the Darwin Mobile Force . After the Second World War began in September 1939 , Robertson became responsible for supplying the 7th Military District 's quota of volunteers for the Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF) . A strike on the waterfront saw Robertson committing troops to help unload cargo .

On 4 April 1940 , Robertson joined the Second AIF himself , with the rank of brigadier , and was allocated the AIF service number VX20321 . He was appointed to command the 19th Infantry Brigade , which was then being formed from units made surplus by the reduction of the 6th Division from 12 infantry battalions to nine . All three of its battalions , the 2 / 4th , 2 / 8th and 2 / 11th Infantry Battalions , were initially commanded by over @-@ age officers , but the commander of the 2 / 4th was replaced by Ivan Dougherty in August . Initially , Dougherty received a cool reception from Robertson , who was disappointed at being unable to select his own battalion commanders , but Dougherty soon made such a good impression that when Robertson went on leave in October 1940 he recommended that Dougherty act as brigade commander , despite the fact that he was the youngest and most junior of Robertson 's battalion chiefs .

The Battle of Bardia brought to the fore the simmering hostility between regular officers and reservists . Frank Berryman , the 6th Division 's General Staff Officer (Grade 1) , and Alan Vasey , the Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General (DA & QMG) , were eager for Robertson to do well and show that Staff Corps officers could make good commanders , and if that could be done at the expense of an old @-@ style reservist like Stanley Savige , so much the better . They pushed for Robertson 's 19th Infantry Brigade , then in reserve , to be committed when the attack by Savige 's 17th Infantry Brigade slowed down . The abrupt manner in which this was done generated antipathy between Robertson and Savige .

The 19th Infantry Brigade then advanced on Tobruk . The attack on this fortified town proceeded along similar lines to that on Bardia , with the 16th Infantry effecting a break @-@ in of the position , but this time the 19th Infantry Brigade was to carry out the exploitation phase . Robertson 's contribution to the plan was to increase its tempo , so that the attack would be carried through without pause , the exploitation being carried out before the initial break @-@ in was complete . Robertson accepted the surrender of the fortress commander , Generale di Corpo d 'Armata Petassi Manella , and later Admiral Messimiliano Vietina , the Italian naval commander . Comments by " a sunburnt red @-@ headed Australian brigadier " made headlines in Britain , where senior officers rarely spoke to the media , but did not endear Robertson to his critics , who felt that his ego was out of control . Following the entry of the 19th Infantry Brigade to Benghazi on 7 February , Robertson declared " give me two stout ships and a bearing on Rome and we 'll dine in the hall of the caesars " .

For this campaign , Robertson was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) , but later that month he was hospitalised for varicose veins in the leg he had broken in 1917 . He was replaced as commander of the 19th Infantry Brigade by Alan Vasey . When Robertson recovered he was given responsibility for the training of AIF reinforcements in the Middle East . Robertson 's service in the field and his long experience in training troops made him an ideal

candidate for the post . For his services , Robertson was mentioned in despatches a third time .

= = = Defence of Australia = = =

Around the time of the outbreak of war with Japan , many senior officers with distinguished records in the Middle East were recalled to Australia to lead militia formations and fill important staff posts . One of these was Robertson , who was recalled to take command of the 1st Cavalry Division in January 1942 . In March 1942 , an unusual event occurred . Major Generals Alan Vasey and Edmund Herring , and Brigadier Clive Steele , fearing that Gordon Bennett or John Lavarack was about to be appointed Commander in Chief , approached the Minister for the Army , Frank Forde , with a proposal that in view of the danger of an invasion of Australia , all officers over the age of 50 be immediately retired and Robertson be appointed Commander in Chief . This reflected an extraordinary endorsement of Robertson by his colleagues , but such favourable opinion was not universally held . Sydney Rowell later explained that :

Robbie , although in Sydney , was not unaware of what was going on . The thing that really riled me was Vasey 's saying that " perhaps Robbie 's vices in peace would be virtues in war , to which I replied that " if meanmindedness and disloyalty could be counted as virtues at any time I might be prepared to go along with him . "

The " revolt of the generals " collapsed with the welcome news that Blamey was returning from the Middle East to become Commander in Chief . In the reorganisation of the Army that followed , Robertson was appointed to command the 1st Armoured Division . Initially , the 1st Armoured Division had a key role in the defence of Australia as a mobile reserve , but it was only partly trained and equipped , representing another major challenge to Robertson as a trainer of troops . When the prospect of an invasion of Australia became remote , the 1st Armoured Division was sent to Western Australia in January 1943 , where it became part of Bennett 's III Corps . The area became a backwater and the 1st Armoured Division was slowly broken up and then disbanded . To recoup some of the nation 's investment in training for armoured warfare , Robertson arranged for 25 officers to be seconded to the British 7th Armoured Division in Europe . Following the disbandment of the 1st Armoured Division , Robertson took over command of the 2nd Division , the other division in Western Australia , and then , upon Bennett 's retirement , III Corps in April 1944 . This too was disbanded in June 1944 and Robertson took over Western Command .

Because the Army reached its greatest extent in 1942 and shrank in size thereafter , Blamey was faced with a limited number of senior appointments and more senior officers than he needed to fill them . He faced public and political criticism over " shelving " senior officers , including Robertson . That Robertson and Bennett , two troublesome potential rivals of Blamey 's , had been sent to Western Australia did not escape comment . However , it was always more likely that Robertson would be the one recalled . Nevertheless , Blamey had serious concerns about Robertson 's health , after the latter was hospitalised with internal haemorrhaging in July 1944 and sent to the eastern states to convalesce . While there he joined Vasey and Brigadier Bertrand Coombes , the Commandant of Duntroon , in conducting an inquiry into the future training and organisation of the Royal Military College . Their report , submitted to Blamey in January 1945 , called for a number of reforms , the most significant being that the postings of regular officers should alternate between staff and regimental duties .

= = = New Guinea = = =

In April 1945 , Robertson returned to the field , replacing Alan Ramsay as commander of the 5th Division , which was then engaged in the final stages of the New Britain Campaign . In July , Robertson became commander of the 6th Division , leading it through the final days of the Aitape ? Wewak Campaign . On 13 September 1945 , Robertson accepted the surrender of Lieutenant General Hataz? Adachi , and his Japanese Eighteenth Army . In December 1945 , Robertson took over command of the First Army , becoming one of a select number of Australians to command such a formation , at least on paper , with the rank of lieutenant general . For the final campaigns ,

Robertson was mentioned in despatches a fourth time .

= = Post @-@ war career = =

= = = British Commonwealth Occupation Force = = =

Robertson returned to Australia in March 1946 to take over Southern Command . In June he was appointed to replace Lieutenant General John Northcott as commander of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) in the occupation of Japan . Northcott had negotiated the Northcott @-@ MacArthur agreement in January 1946 with General of the Army Douglas MacArthur , which governed the terms and conditions under which the BCOF would occupy part of Japan . They agreed that the BCOF would serve under American command , with American policy being followed . It remained to make the occupation work . Robertson had a poor relationship with the British component commander , Major General David Tennant Cowan , who resented being placed under an Australian officer . " It did not occur to me " , Robertson later wrote , " that officers of the British and Indian armies looked upon us from Australia and New Zealand as they looked upon Indians , and were prepared to do anything to avoid being publicly commanded by us . "

The British government 's principal interest in Japan was to renew pre @-@ war trade concessions , and to secure new ones ; it was particularly interested in the port city of Kobe . The Americans blocked these attempts . Robertson clashed repeatedly with Lieutenant General Sir Charles Gairdner , the official representative of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom . Gairdner was nominally senior in rank to Robertson until March 1947 , when Robertson was promoted to the substantive rank of lieutenant general , backdated to January 1944 . Robertson resisted Gairdner 's requests for BCOF aircraft for personal purposes .

= = = Korean War = = =

By mid @-@ 1950 , the BCOF was winding down . All the contingents other than the Australians had departed , and the Australians were preparing to leave . For his services as commander of the BCOF , Robertson was created a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (Military Division) (KBE) in the King 's Birthday Honours List . Robertson intended to travel to London to be invested by King George VI but his plans were disrupted by the outbreak of the Korean War on 25 June 1950 . Robertson passed on to the Australian government requests from MacArthur for BCOF assistance , which were agreed to . He committed the frigate HMAS Shoalhaven and No. 77 Squadron RAAF but , although authorised to do so , he hesitated to deploy the 3rd Battalion , Royal Australian Regiment , as he considered the risks too great .

Robertson built up what became the British Commonwealth Forces Korea (BCFK) . While the British government had hoped to have the Americans supply all their logistic support , Robertson realised that this was impossible . The US Army was being stretched to its limit just supporting itself and the army of the Republic of Korea , and British Commonwealth equipment was different in many respects . The British Army then scrambled to meet its own logistic needs , creating ad hoc arrangements and requesting support from Robertson and MacArthur . The Chief of the General Staff , Sydney Rowell , sent a cable to his British counterpart , Field Marshal Sir William Slim , warning of " a bugger 's muddle in which the only people to suffer will be the soldiers " . Slim agreed ; a Maintenance Area was established in Korea to support Commonwealth forces there , which drew some resources from American sources , such as petrol , oil and lubricants , engineer stores , casualty evacuation and port operations , and the rest from BCOF in Japan .

Once again , the British government did not wish to entrust its interests in Japan to a foreign officer , so the British Chiefs of Staff appointed Air Vice Marshal Cecil Bouchier as their representative at MacArthur 's headquarters . His brief made it clear that he had no responsibility or authority over the BCOF or Commonwealth forces in Korea . After rashly ordering the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade to Pusan without transport or heavy equipment , much to Robertson 's annoyance ,

Bouchier did attempt to confine himself to acting solely as a liaison officer . Following the dismissal of General Douglas MacArthur , Robertson held a press conference in which he defended the general and his conduct of the war . This constituted an implicit condemnation of the British government 's policy . Soon after , during the Battle of the Imjin River , Robertson was consulted by the Americans about the possible consequences of the loss of the 1st Battalion , the Gloucestershire Regiment , and he advised them not to endanger the rest of the I Corps line with a rescue attempt . For his services in the Korean War , he was awarded the American Legion of Merit , and the South Korean Order of Military Merit .

= = Later life = =

Robertson was recalled to Australia in November 1951 , replacing Sir Edmund Herring as Director General of Recruiting . In January 1953 , Robertson took over Southern Command again . This put him in uncomfortably close proximity to Rowell , however , and the two clashed over a number of minor issues . Robertson turned 60 on 29 October 1954 , and retired the next day , after racking up 3 @, @ 985 days of active service in 43 years in the Australian Army . From 1954 to 1960 , he was honorary colonel of the Royal Australian Regiment . In retirement Robertson served on the committee of the Metropolitan Golf Club and was president of the Victorian branch of the Royal Empire Society for a time . He commenced writing his memoirs , which he promised would be " the million pound libel " . Unfortunately , the fate of the papers he gathered for it and the unfinished manuscript itself is unknown .

On 28 April 1960 he suffered a ruptured aorta and died at the Repatriation General Hospital , Heidelberg . His sudden death came as a shock to many . A funeral with full military honours was held at Scots ' Church , Melbourne . For pall bearers , he had eight generals : Leslie Beavis , Allan Boase , Cyril Clowes , Hector Edgar , Ragnar Garrett , Edmund Herring , Sydney Rowell and Colin Simpson . Frank Kingsley Norris carried his decorations while the 2nd Battalion , Royal Australian Regiment and 1st Armoured Regiment provided honour guards for the largest military funeral since Blamey 's in 1951 . Afterwards , he was buried with his wife , who had died in 1956 , at Springvale Botanical Cemetery . The Robertson Barracks was later named in his honour .