



Lieutenant Colonel P. CURRIE CMG, DSO

[1883 – 1949]



Colonel Currie was President of the Club in 1921

Patrick Currie was born on 2 August 1883 at Petrie Creek, near Caboolture, Queensland, son of Daniel Currie [1838-1910], a farmer, and his Irish-born wife Bridget, (née Neylon) [1845-1903]. They had married in 1866. His father Daniel was one of the early settlers in Nambour, and the main street is named after him.

Patrick was the youngest of nine children – all, other than the eldest, were born in Nambour.

John	[1866-1913]	Born in Brisbane, and became Mayor of South Brisbane in 1902
William	[1868-1917]	
Francis	[1870-1898]	
Mary	[b.1872]	
Margaret	[1874-1875]	
Thomas	[1875-1946]	
Daniel	[1877- 1946]	
Elizabeth	[1880-1954]	

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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He was educated at Nambour State School, and in 1898 he commenced training as a teacher with the Queensland Education Department.

In 1911 on his return from Hong Kong, he married Catherine "Kitty" (née Gallwey) [1881-1949] in St Stephen's Cathedral, Brisbane. She had been a fellow teacher at Brisbane East School in 1906. They had three children:

- Francis Joseph [1912-1980] Born and died in Brisbane – a clerk. Married Gabrielle Agnes (née Tyrrell) in 1936. Lived in Townsville and Brisbane.
- Neal Lincoln ¹ [1914-1975] Born in Brisbane, died in Victoria. Army Officer. Married Wynette Delia (née Walsh) [1914-1998]. They had one daughter.
- Joan [1920? – 1949+] Little is known of Joan Currie

The family initially lived at Sandgate and, on returning to Brisbane from country postings, later at Toombul

With a strong interest in the militia, Currie was commissioned as a lieutenant in the cadets in 1906; and had attained the rank of captain on the eve of World War I. Joining the AIF on 28 April 1915, in May he was promoted major in 'B' Company, 26th Battalion, drawn from Queensland and Tasmania. Embarked in June, the battalion was placed in reserve at Anzac Cove until it relieved the 28th Battalion. On 30 November Currie was appointed second-in-command, and next day he was wounded in the forehead while on an inspection tour and was evacuated to hospital.

Rejoining the battalion in Egypt in January 1916 Currie took command of 'A' Company. The unit deployed to France in March and on 7 June relieved the 28th Battalion (again) in the line near Pozières. He displayed consistent gallantry for which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

The citation reads

"For continuous good work at Gallipoli and in the trenches at Bois Grenier and Messines. In the attack on the Pozieres Ridge on 4th and 5th August 1916 by his prompt action in jumping onto the parapet and rallying and directing the men of the second wave of the attack, who, through congestion were hesitating, he materially contributed to the success of the attack in which he was subsequently wounded"

Currie commanded 7th Training Brigade in Britain until June 1917. In February 1917 he acted as an escort to H.M. The King at the Opening of Parliament. He returned to 26th Battalion in July 1917. In March 1918 he took command of the West Australian 28th Battalion, with the temporary rank of Lieutenant Colonel. For his gallantry during the Passchendaele and Somme operations he was awarded the CMG in June 1919 ("... for services rendered in connection with military operations in France and Flanders."). He was also awarded the French Croix de Guerre and twice mentioned in dispatches (1917 and 1918). He returned to Australia in September 1919.

A very big man with snow-white hair and moustache, Currie looked much older than he was. Nicknamed 'Snow' or 'Snowy', his experience as a teacher had given him a good understanding of his men, most of whom he knew by name and ability. He was a popular commander who exercised firm but humane control and knew when to turn a Nelsonian eye.

Appointed as brevet major (and temporary Lieutenant Colonel) he commanded 49th Battalion at Kelvin Grove on the re-establishment of the Citizen Forces in 1921-22. He subsequently commanded the 42nd Battalion in Rockhampton from 1931 to 1934.

¹ Brigadier N.L. Currie CBE. Entered RMC 1933, Commissioned 1936; Adjutant and QM 25th Battalion 1937; Adjutant Darwin Mobile Force 1938; Adjutant 2/15th Battalion 1940; service in North Africa 1942 (PoW in Italy and Germany; awarded MiD). Transferred to Regular Army AASC and became Deputy Master-General of the Ordnance. Awarded CBE in January 1967.

In the Second World War in June 1941 he joined the AIF Ships Staff with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He served as assistant officer in charge of troops on the troopships *Queen Elizabeth* and *Aquitania* in the Middle East and Java, and later as officer-in-charge on the troopships *Taroona* and *Awkui* in New Guinea. In April 1943 he was placed on the Retired List.

During his career with the Queensland Education Department, he taught in primary schools and on 31 December 1948 retired as headmaster of New Farm primary school. He taught at Nambour (from 1903), Brisbane East (from 1905). He resigned in 1908 and spent two and a half years in Ellis Kadoorie College, Hong Kong before rejoining the Department at Eagle Junction (from 1911). After his war service he also briefly resigned to (unsuccessfully) stand for the state seat of Brisbane in 1920 as a Soldier Nationalist candidate; before being appointed as Head Teacher (Principal) at Sandgate (from 1921), Greenmount (from 1922), Collinsville (from 1924), Cairns Boys (from 1926), Allenstown (Rockhampton) (from 1929), Enoggera (from 1934), Toowong and New Farm.

Currie joined the Club in 1919.

In the time of his Presidency at a special general meeting called for the purpose on 27 October 1921, the United Service Institution of Queensland changed its name back to the original, United Service Club. No explanation for this action is available, because no records remain, but it could be presumed that the reasons which prompted the previous change had ceased to have any relevance, and it was merely a return to normal. After all, the primary reason for the Club's creation was, as Major General Owen had so adequately expressed, to provide 'some place where the officers of the services might meet more frequently in social intercourse'. 'Club' in every respect, would appear to be the most appropriate title for such a meeting place.

Colonel Currie died on 6 January 1949 from heart disease in Toombul, Brisbane, and was buried in the Catholic section of Lutwyche cemetery. He was survived by his wife (briefly) and children.

Sources included:

- 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
- Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 8, (MUP), 1981
- NAA and AWM archives
- Trove
- *Let Enemies Beware* Ron Austin, Slouch Hat Publications, Australia, 1995