

MAJOR BERNHARD TRAUGOTT ZWAR – STOCKWELL

First World War

Bernhard Traugott Zwar was born on the 20 June 1876 at Ebenezer, near Stockwell. He was the youngest of 10 children of Johann Zwar and Anna, nee Kaiser, who had migrated to Australia in 1851.

Bernhard attended the state school at Stockwell and then went on to an English High School in the Barossa Valley, where he excelled in German, and finally to Prince Alfred College in Adelaide. He hoped to become a Lutheran Pastor, but as this would have meant studying in Europe, he decided to study medicine at the University of Adelaide like his older brother Hermann.

He began his medical studies in March 1895, however, due to the Adelaide Hospital Row, the two brothers moved to Ormond College, Melbourne and completed their medical studies at the Melbourne University where they both graduated.

Bernhard graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine in 1899, Bachelor of Surgery in 1901 and his Doctor of Medicine in 1902. Bernhard topped the class, won the Exhibition in Medicine, and was placed first on the list for the seven resident positions at the Melbourne Hospital. At the age of 28 in 1904, Bernhard went overseas for post-graduate studies. With a special interest in Neurology and Tuberculosis, he met and conversed with the world-famous bacteriologist Dr Robert Koch and worked at various hospitals in London. For a time, he was clinical clerk to Sir William Gowers at the National Hospital, Queen Square. Bernhard returned to Melbourne in early 1906 and went on to build a distinguished career as a surgeon and administrator.

Bernhard was a Captain in the Australian Army Medical Corps reserve in 14th Field Ambulance as a Medical Doctor from July 1912 and at the outbreak of the First World War where he applied for a commission in the Australian Imperial Forces (A.I.F.) and enlisted on 19 October 1914, at the age of 38 years and 4 months.

He was posted to Australian Army Medical Corps (A.A.M.C.) and allocated to 2 Australian Stationary Hospital with the rank of Major. Bernhard embarked with his unit from Fremantle, Western Australia, on board the Transport Ship A55 Kyarra on the 14 of December 1914 and disembarked in Suez in Egypt in early 1915. Whilst in Egypt, at Wazza, Bernhard was the senior A.I.F. specialist in venereal disease and he lamented the wastage that this caused, with 1000 men infected at any one time.

Bernhard deployed with A.I.F. and Mediterranean Expeditionary Forces (M.E.F.) and tended to the wounded at the Gallipoli Landing. He was transferred from Lemnos on 3 July 1915 via Cairo to London with a festering appendicitis. He returned to Egypt on 25 September 1915 but did not return to duty. He returned to Australia on 3 January 1916 and his military appointment was terminated on 19 February 1916. He was issued with the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Bernhard had travelled to the Middle East on the same troopship as a young nurse, Essy Craig, whom he had met at the Melbourne Hospital. They renewed their acquaintance and were married on the 4 May 1916 and lived in Collins Street, Melbourne.

Bernhard was an honorary surgeon to the Melbourne Hospital from 1919 and an honorary consulting surgeon from

1935. He was a founder of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (R.A.C.S.) in 1927 and was on the Medical Board of Victoria, the advisory committee of the Repatriation Board and the Anti-Cancer Council. When Don Bradman was in Melbourne and needed medical attention, it was Bernhard who treated him.

Bernhard was appointed Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (C.M.G.) in January 1941. A portrait of Bernhard Traugott Zwar hangs in the main entrance to the Royal Melbourne Hospital as a tribute to his outstanding service to the hospital over a period of 46 years. It was unveiled by the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Edmund Herring, just before he died.

Major Bernhard Traugott Zwar died at his home in Melbourne on 16 January 1947, aged 68 years. He was survived by his wife and son.



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Image and information provided by Anthony McLean – Nuriootpa RSL

Sources

Blood, Sweat and Fears: Medical Practitioners and Medical Students of South Australia, who Served in World War 1. Verco, Summers, Swain, Jelly. Open Books Howden, Adelaide 2019.

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