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BIOGRAPHY

Who was ......Charles Henry Brand?

Major-General C. H. Brand, CB, CMG, DSO, a Boer War veteran, joined the permanent military forces in 1905. In the Great War, he was brigade major of the 3rd Brigade at the Gallipoli landing (1915) and later commanded the 8th Battalion at Steele's Post. In France and Flanders, he commanded the 4th Infantry Brigade, most notably at Bullecourt (1917), in the Third Battle of Ypres (1917), and during the German and Allied offensives of 1918. Post-war, he held senior army staff appointments until retiring in 1933, then represented Victoria in the Senate until 1947. He was president of The United Service Institution of New South Wales in 1924.

Charles Henry Brand was born on 4 September 1873 in Queensland and became a state school teacher. In 1898, he was commissioned lieutenant in the Queensland Volunteer Infantry and on the outbreak of war in South Africa enlisted as a sergeant in the 3rd Queensland (Mounted Infantry) Contingent. He served with the Rhodesian Field Force and in operations in the Transvaal, the Orange River and Cape colonies; being commissioned lieutenant on 25 June 1900.

In 1905, Brand joined the permanent military forces as a lieutenant and was attached to the administrative and instructional staff in Melbourne. He was promoted captain in 1909 and spent two years on exchange duty in India. On his return, he was appointed to the South Australian staff as acting commandant in 1912 and promoted major. A contemporary described him as "the most energetic officer and best instructor" he had ever known.

When 1st Division, Australian Imperial Force, was raised in August 1914, Brand was appointed brigade major of the 3rd Infantry Brigade. It was the first brigade ashore at Gaba Tepe, Gallipoli, on 25 April 1915. Brand was conspicuous that day, helping direct troops on Plateau 400, organising stragglers under fire at Gaba Tepe and leading an attack which resulted in the disablement of three enemy guns.

During the Turkish counter-attack of mid-May, Brand was temporary commander of the 3rd Battalion and was slightly wounded when a German naval shell landed in his headquarters. Remaining on duty, in July he was promoted lieutenant-colonel and given command of the 8th Battalion (2nd Brigade), which relieved Steele's Post on 18 July, where it remained until the evacuation despite constant bombardment causing a high incidence of casualties (mainly shock). Brand was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for devotion to duty and gallantry at Anzac, the first Australian to receive this award for Gallipoli service.

Brand's battalion reached the Western Front in March 1916 and went to the Somme. On 10 July, he was given command of the 4th Brigade (4th Division). He lived down the effects of an "extraordinarily inept and egotistic" oration to his troops and held his command for more than two years.

In 1916-17, the brigade served at Pozières, Bullecourt, Messines, Polygon Wood and Passchendaele. Its heaviest losses were at Bullecourt where, after a few hours fighting, there were more than 2000 casualties. Brand, who had strenuously opposed the plan to attack with the assistance of tanks only and without artillery support, wept as he saw the remnants of his troops emerging from the line. At Messines, he was wounded when a shell exploded outside brigade headquarters and was out of action for a month.

When the German offensive on the Somme began in March 1918, the brigade was drawn into a gap in the Gommecourt-Hébuterne area, where it hung on for three crucial weeks. Afterwards, Brand led the brigade in the capture Morcourt and Méricourt in July, and in its last operation close to the Hindenburg Line. Between 27 September and 4 October, he helped to lead the 27th American Division through its first big battle. Afterwards, he was invested at Buckingham Palace with the Companion of the Bath (CB), the Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) and the DSO. During the war, he was mentioned in despatches eight times.

On 21 February 1919, Brand resumed duty with the Australian Military Forces. He was commandant in Victoria in 1919-20 and was base commandant in New South Wales in 1921-25. He became 2nd chief of the general staff and a member of the Military Board in 1926 and two years later became quartermaster-general, retiring in 1933 in the rank of major-general.

In 1934, he won a Victorian Senate seat for the United Australia Party and held it until June 1947. In parliament, he mainly concerned himself with defence policy and the needs of ex-servicemen and chaired the Federal Parliamentary Ex-Servicemen's Committee in 1942-47. He died on 31 July 1961 and was cremated with full military honours. He was a soldiers' general and was trusted and well liked by his troops who honoured him with the nickname 'Digger'.

A. J. Sweeting [edited by David Leece[1]]

Reference

Sweeting, A. J. (1979). Brand, Charles Henry (1873-1961). *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Volume 7 (Melbourne University Press: Melbourne) pp. 390-391.

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[1]This is an abridged version of Sweeting (1979), with information on General Brand's term as president of The United Service Institution of New South Wales added by the editor. Photo of General Brand: National Library of Australia portrait by Spencer Shier c. 1930s – nla.pic-an23243254.