

COLLECTION TITLE	Papers of Lieutenant-General Sir Vernon Ashton Hobart Sturdee
COLLECTION IDENTIFIER	MSS 183
INCLUSIVE DATE(S)	1914 to 1987
EXTENT	2 boxes
CREATOR	Sturdee, Alfred Hobart -- Diaries. Sturdee, Vernon Ashton Hobart, Sir, 1890-1966
RELATED ENTITIES	Sturdee, Alfred Hobart -- Diaries. Sturdee, Vernon Ashton Hobart, Sir, 1890-1966 Australian Army Australian Army, Australian Engineers, Field Company, 5th Australian Armed Forces, Officers
RELATED COLLECTIONS	Papers of Lieutenant-General Sir Vernon Ashton Hobart Sturdee
ACCESS POINTS	Army officers Australia. Armed Forces -- Officers -- Archives Australia. Army. Australian Engineers. Field Company, 5th Generals -- Australia -- Diaries

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Lieutenant-General Sir Vernon Ashton Hobart Sturdee, KBE, CB, CBE, DSO, was born on the 16 April 1890 in Frankston, Victoria. He was the son of Alfred Hobart Sturdee who commanded the 2nd Field Ambulance, Australian Imperial Force, at Gallipoli. He was the nephew of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Frederick Charles Doveton Sturdee, Royal Navy and Sir Charles Merrett.

He was educated at Church of England Grammar School, Melbourne. He was commissioned in 1908, and on 1 February 1911 was appointed lieutenant on probation, Royal Australian Engineers, Permanent Military Forces. In the following year he was posted to Brisbane for staff duties in the 1st Military District.

In March 1913 Sturdee was posted back to Melbourne. Transferring to the A.I.F. on 25 August 1914, he was promoted captain in October. He embarked for Egypt on board HMAT A3 *Orvieto*. On 25 April 1915 and landed at Gallipoli as adjutant, 1st Divisional Engineers. Suffering from influenza, he was evacuated in July, but returned in September as a major, commanding the 5th Field Company, 2nd Divisional Engineers. For the next three months he controlled the engineering and mining work at Steele's, Quinn's and Courtney's posts. From January 1916 he supervised the building of huts at Tel el Kebir camp, Egypt. After the 5th Division was raised, his field company was transferred to that formation and renumbered the 8th. In March he took charge of the construction of defences at Ferry Post.

He was sent to France in June 1916, and acted as Commander, Royal Engineers, Franks Force, in September-October, and led a party which repaired the road between Albert and Montauban in November. For his work in 1915-16 he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. On 13 February 1917 he was promoted temporary lieutenant colonel and given command of the 4th Pioneer Battalion. Over the next nine months the unit maintained roads, constructed camps, laid cables and dug communication trenches.

In November 1917 Sturdee was appointed commander, Royal Australian Engineers, 5th Division. In what was an exceptional case for an officer from the dominions, he was seconded in March 1918 to British General Headquarters, France, as a general staff officer, 2nd grade. The secondment gave him invaluable experience and an insight into the conduct of large-scale operations. Returning to the 5th Division in October, he sailed for Australia next month and disembarked in Sydney in January 1919. He was appointed OBE (1919) and twice mentioned in despatches for his service in World War I.

After Sturdee's A.I.F. appointment terminated on 14 March, he carried out staff duties in Melbourne. In 1922-23 he completed the course at the Staff College, Quetta, India. A year as instructor in engineering and surveying at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, Federal Capital Territory, was followed by a term (from 1925) on the staff of the 4th Division. Sent to London in May 1929, he served on exchange at the War Office with the Directorate of Military Operations and Intelligence, attended the Imperial Defence College in 1931 and then held the post of military representative at the Australian High Commission.

Home once more in February 1933, Sturdee was appointed director of military operations and intelligence at Army Headquarters, Melbourne. In May 1935 he was given the added duties of assistant-secretary (military) to the Council of Defence. Two months later he was promoted brevet colonel (substantive July 1937). He was primarily concerned with the operational aspects of plans to mobilize forces to defend Australia and to raise other formations to serve overseas. In March 1938 he became the inaugural director of staff duties. He was appointed CBE in 1939. At the request of the Australian government a British officer, Lieutenant-General E. K. Squires, reviewed the Australian Military Forces in 1938-39. Sturdee supported his proposals for reform.

Following the outbreak of World War II, Squires (then chief of the General Staff) promoted Sturdee temporary lieutenant general in September 1939 and appointed him head of the new Eastern Command, Sydney, from 13 October. Next month Sturdee was also given the duties of commander, 2nd Military District. He took charge of raising, accommodating, training and equipping A.I.F. units in New South Wales at the same time as he prepared local defences. On 1 July 1940 he readily accepted demotion to major general on his appointment as commander of the 8th Division. His pleasure in having been given an operational command was to be brief. Squires had died in March and his successor as C.G.S., Sir Brudenell White, was killed in an aeroplane crash on 13 August. Seventeen days later Sturdee was promoted lieutenant general and appointed C.G.S., first military member of the Military Board and head of the Australian Section of the Imperial General Staff. Sturdee was appointed C.B. in 1943.

In March 1944, Sturdee took command of the First Australian Army. At a ceremony on board H.M.S. *Glory* at Rabaul, New Britain, on 6 September 1945, he accepted the surrender of Japanese forces in his area. Blamey recommended him for a knighthood, and he was mentioned in despatches for his services in the South-West Pacific Area.

On 1 December 1945, Sturdee was appointed Acting Commander-in-Chief, Australian Military Forces, based in Melbourne. Four months later he resumed the duties of C.G.S., first military member of the Military Board and chief of the Australian Section of the Imperial General Staff. He had to oversee the repatriation and demobilization of the wartime army, and to organize the Australian contingent for service with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, Japan; he was also responsible for the establishment of the Australian Regular Army and of the reconstituted Citizen Military Forces. To meet future requirements of the armed services, he strongly supported efforts to retain the industrial capacity that Australia had developed during the war.

On 17 April 1950 he was placed on the Retired List. In 1951 he was appointed KBE.

Lieutenant-General Sir Vernon Ashton Hobart Sturdee died on 25 May 1966 at the Repatriation General Hospital, Heidelberg, Victoria.

Colonel Alfred Hobart Sturdee, CMG, VD, MRCS, was born on the 6 May 1863 at Southsea near Portsmouth, Hampshire, United Kingdom. He graduated from King's College Hospital, London, and served as a ship's doctor on a voyage to Australia in the 1880s. He settled at Williamstown, Victoria, where he established a successful private medical and surgical practice.

He was commissioned in the Colony of Victoria on 8 March 1889, and served as a Captain (Medical Staff) in the Boer War, 1900-1902, as part of the 4th Victorian Imperial Contingent. He was mentioned in despatches in July 1901, and awarded the Queen's Medal with 3 clasps and the King's Medal with two clasps. After being on the Reserve of Officers List from July 1903, he re-enlisted in the Australian Army Medical Corps in January 1905, was promoted to major in the 2nd Field Ambulance in August 1908, and lieutenant-colonel in the 16th Field Ambulance in December 1912.

On 18 August 1914, aged 51, he raised the 2nd Field Ambulance at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne. He embarked from Australia on board HMAT A18 *Wiltshire* on 19 October 1914, arriving in Egypt on 11 December 1914.

On the 6 April 1915, he embarked on HMAT 13 *Mashobra* and anchored just off the Gallipoli Peninsula on 25 April. He served as the Principal Medical Officer at Gallipoli from the landing on 25 April 1915, until the final evacuation. On 15 December he left HQ (Anzac Gully) on board *Heroic*, and landed at Sarpi, Lemnos on 16 December. He returned to Egypt from Lemnos on 15 February 1916.

He commenced service on the Western Front on 30 March 1916 as ADMS of 1 Australian Division, and served in various locations in France and Belgium. On 21 November 1916, he was evacuated from the Front with chronic bronchial disability to London. He embarked for Australia on 10 February 1917, and arrived in Melbourne on 12 April, where he took up duty as DDMS 3rd Military District and later Director of Medical Services, Repatriation Department until he retired.

He was mentioned in despatches twice in 1916 and once in 1917, and awarded the Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (CMG) in 1916.

Colonel Alfred Hobart Sturdee died in Melbourne, aged 76 on 19 June 1939.

References:

Abridged version of *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, 'Sturdee, Sir Vernon Ashton Hobart (1890 - 1966) army officer', retrieved 17 April 2008.

'Father and son on Gallipoli : Alfred Hobart Sturdee and Vernon Ashton Hobart Sturdee', by John Buckley.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This small collection comprises two notebooks and a correspondence book written by Captain (later Major) Vernon Ashton Hobart Sturdee during his World War I service at Gallipoli in 1915, and a notebook of his father's Colonel Alfred Hobart Sturdee, who also served at Gallipoli with his son, together with a précis of Vernon Sturdee's notebooks prepared by Brigadier K.R. Colwill. Also included are two ink sketches of landing plans for Kapa Tepe and Cape Helles coast line, and photographs of Colonel Alfred Hobart Sturdee, AIF with his brother Vice-Admiral Sir Doveton Sturdee, RN, aboard flagship HMS *Hercules*, at Scapa Flow, U.K., December 1916; Captain R.V. Cutler, outside dugouts at Shrapnel Gully Anzac, October 1915; and Colonel Alfred Hobart Sturdee, AIF, 1915.

The notebooks made during the Gallipoli campaign in 1915, provide a fascinating and rare insight into the character of the writers. Personal notes about the author's are scarce in these books; their notes concern primarily the duties they were performing. Vernon Sturdee burnt most of his private papers.

Colonel Alfred Hobart Sturdee and his son, Captain Vernon Ashton Hobart Sturdee both served on Gallipoli from the landing on 25 April 1915, until the final evacuation, except for a period when they were evacuated due to serious illness.

Also included is a an abbreviated story by Colonel John Buckley, OBE, ED (RL), taken mostly from their notebooks entitled 'Father and son on Gallipoli : Alfred Hobart Sturdee and Vernon Ashton Hobart Sturdee', published in *Defence force journal*, No. 81, March/April 1990, p. 30-51.

ARRANGEMENT

This collection has been arranged into box then folder order.

ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

The collection is available for research.

SOURCE OF ACQUISITION

This collection was acquired by the Academy Library in 1987 from Colonel J.P. Buckley and Mrs Margaret Buckley née Sturdee, the daughter of Lieutenant-General Sturdee.

EXISTENCE AND LOCATION OF ORIGINALS

Special Collections, UNSW Canberra

Collection Contents

Papers of Lieutenant-General Sir Vernon Ashton Hobart Sturdee (MSS 183)(4 records)

1914 to 1987 (Inclusive date(s))

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Lieutenant-General Sir Vernon Ashton Hobart Sturdee: Diary 1: 25 April 1915 to 2 July 1915 (MSS 183.1.1)

Lieutenant-General Sir Vernon Ashton Hobart Sturdee: Diary 2: 3 September- 31 December 1915 (MSS 183.1.2)

Lieutenant-General Sir Vernon Ashton Hobart Sturdee: Diary 3: 22 Sept 1915 – 23 Jan 1916 (MSS 183.1.3)

Alfred Hobart Sturdee: Diary 1: 8 August 1914 to 25 February 1918 (MSS 183.1)

Box 1 (MSS 183.B1)

Folder 1 (MSS 183.B1.1)

1915 to 1987 (Inclusive date(s))

Notebooks and notes (entries for July and August 1915 appear to be in another book), 1915-1987

Including:

Brown leather notebook/diary of Captain Vernon Sturdee, Headquarters Division Engineers, 1st Australian Division, covers the period from Sunday 25/4/1915 to 2/7/1915

Black notebook of Captain Vernon Sturdee, covers the period from Friday 3/9/1915 to 31/12/1915, and includes aide memoir jottings and engineering sketches

Correspondence Book Army Book 152 (Field Service), 22/9/1915 to 23/1/1916, includes carbon copies of official memos by Captain Sturdee at Gallipoli, the front flyleaf comprises a brief record of Sturdee's military service

Précis of Vernon Sturdee's notebooks prepared by Brigadier K.R. Colwill, 14 March 1987, 5 page typescript, 1915-1987

Folder 2 (MSS 183.B1.2)

1914 to 1918 (Inclusive date(s))

Sketches, notebook and photocopy of article, 1914-1918

Including:

Landing plans for Kapa Tepe and Cape Helles coast line, 2 black and white manuscript ink sketches (possibly by Colonel A.H. Sturdee)

Black notebook of Colonel Alfred Hobart Sturdee, AIF, 2nd Field Ambulance, AIF, 18/8/1914 to 25 February 1918; the last page comprises a brief record of Colonel Sturdee's military service

Photocopy of article entitled 'Father and son on Gallipoli : Alfred Hobart Sturdee and Vernon Ashton Hobart Sturdee', by Colonel John Buckley, published in *Defence force journal*, No. 81, March/April 1990, p. 30-51

Folder 3 (MSS 183.B1.3)

1914 to 1918 (Inclusive date(s))

Photocopies of the four notebooks, 1914-1918

Box 2 (MSS 183.B2)

Box-folder 2 Cool room (MSS 183.B2.2)

1916 (Inclusive date(s))

Photographs including:

Colonel Alfred Hobart Sturdee, AIF with his brother Vice Admiral Sir Doveton Sturdee, RN, aboard flagship HMS *Hercules*, at Scapa Flow, UK, December 1916

Captain R.V. Cutler, outside dugouts at Shrapnel Gully Anzac, October 1915

Photograph of Colonel Alfred Hobart Sturdee, AIF, 1915. Verso has a taped on dried sprig, possibly from a seedling of a Gallipoli oak tree (*Quercus Calliprinos*)
