**Otto Wein Smith**

**This is transcript of Dr Geoff Wien Smith’s written reflections**

Otto Wein Smith was the second son of Alexander Smith and Isabella Drummond, and was born in 1853 in Aberdeen, Scotland on October 17th.

He was educated in Edinburgh and London

Returned to Edinburgh and was a student of Medicine at the university. Took his Degree as Bachelor of Medicine and Master of…………………

Alexander Smith was in the grain trade and had an Austrian friend in Vienna and he named his second son Otto Wien after his friend. The name Wien has been continued in use by my father in naming his children Wien-Smith.

We find that most people change the pronunciation of Wien Smith pronounced “Vien-Smith to Wien-Smith.

My father joined the P&O Service and was the medical officer at the salary of 10 pounds a month, the same as the cook. He was at sea for several years travelling to China and India and Australia.

My father contracted tuberculosis of the lungs. Going to Plymouth to join his ship he was fortunate to recover from an attach of bleeding from the lungs.

My father’s ship called at Port Adelaide to load wheat. He knew he had a relation in a small town 80 miles north of Adelaide called Clare. He went to see him and during his talk was told that there was only one doctor there called Dr. Bain who needed help.

My father called on Dr Bain who suggested that he should join him as a junior partner. An agreement was drawn up between the two doctors. It contained 18 “where as”” and is still in existence at the local Museum.

My father joined Dr Bain in 1878 and lived with him. He returned to Edinburgh in 1889 and wrote a thesis on hydatids and was awarded the degree of Doctor of Medicine, Edinburgh. (Dr Bain and Dr Otto signed an agreement in 1876, but Dr Otto had an agreement with P&O that had to be fulfilled).

Dr Bain was a great benefactor to the town of Clare. He gave among other things the land and some of the money to build the library and the swimming pool. A memorial to Dr Bain a bandstand, was built on the hill above the Oval.

Dr Bain did not follow all the “where as’s” in his agreement with my father.

One morning in the early hours my father was returning to Dr. Bain’s residence after a night call. He met Dr. Bain walking down the drive and asked him if he was going to a midwifery case, as he was carrying a small black bag. Dr. Bain replied “I am off to England to catch the coach for Saddleworth. My father asked about luggage, and Dr Bain replied, as he patted his bag “I have 50 sovereigns for my father and a clean pair of pyjamas.” He asked my father if the agreement held, then off he went. This left my father in an awkward position with an overdraft at the Bank. My grandfather had moved to London and his third son Alfred (Fred) attended Guys Hospital and took his degree in medicine. As Dr. Bain had left Clare father bought a house in 1890. His sister Margaret Drummond Smith came from London and kept house for him and his brother Dr A.A. Smith, who also came out to join my father as a partner.

Geoffrey Wien-Smith, born a twin with Isabel Wien Smith in Clare, April 19th, 1992 to Dr. Otto and Mrs Wien-Smith. He attended primary school with his two sisters at the Clare Rectory and it was taught by Miss Nancy Webb and Miss Lucy Webb. He attended St Peter’s Collegiate School as a boarder and then went to the Adelaide University as a medical student, and graduated in 1915 with an MBBS degree. He enlisted in 1916 as a Medical Officer in the 11th Field Ambulance. Before going overseas he was appointed as house surgeon at the Adelaide Hospital for 6 months. Left Sydney for England and was billeted on the Salisbury Plain. Saw service at Armentiers and Ypres and Messines. Whilst on leave in England he developed lung trouble and was not allowed to return to France. He joined Sir Henry Newland at (Queen Mary’s Hospital) Sidcup England where they repaired the badly injured face wounds of the soldiers. He was sent to a specialist course in Anesthetics and trained there. He returned to Adelaide in 1919 and went to the Children’s Hospital to get experience in children’s illnesses. Then he joined his father, Dr Otto Wien-Smith and uncle Dr A A Smith as a medical man.

Mr and Mrs Richardson had 18 children and took them to England to further their education on the ship Yatala with Captain Legoe in charge. Approaching England after the long voyage the ships company must have been celebrating the end of the voyage They mistook the lights of France and were ship wrecked at Cape Griney in a sandy bay surrounded by rocky cliffs. (Cape Griz-Nez, France 28th March, 1872) Everyone was saved but not their luggage and they arrived in London in their night clothes and had screens put around them in the dining room. It was good Friday when they arrived and the shops were shut.

Many years later in the First World War I was in France with the 11th Field Ambulance and was the Medical Officer to the men on leave. I took the opportunity to walk and see the small bay where my grandparents were wrecked. My early education with 2 sisters took place at the Church of England Rectory where the Rector’s daughters Miss Nancy and Miss Lucy Webb were our teachers. Their efforts at teaching writing were not very successful (in my case) and I have been a poor writer ever since. Then I went to the Primary School in Clare. I used to run home for lunch and then run back to school. In 1907 (?) I went as a boarder to St Peters College in Adelaide. Eventually, I became a prefect. In the Prefect’s Room was Robert Badger, also of Clare and another boy, whose name escapes me. Our study was only about 12 feet away from the Headmaster’s study. At 9 p.m. Canon Girdleston stentorious voice was heard “Now boys, off to bed”! When I left St Peter’s College I went to the Adelaide University and studied medicine as I had always wanted to be a doctor.

The Canon had been in the Oxford Boat four and was a keen rower and very enthusiastic. As we were only boys and he was a large man, to keep the boat level he had a large tin full of water on his opposite side to balance the Boat.

At University I rowed and played lacrosse in the summer. One day whilst play lacrosse on the University Oval we all stopped playing as the first aeroplane with Captain Bleriot was flying over towards the Hills. He flew so low we could see him clearly.

A few days before I had actually received my degree MBBS a Dr Steele from Burra, asked me to be his locum tenens for a few days. It was fortunate as he had a driver for the car. I found that private practice was a busy one. In the first morning I was called to a patient 30 miles south of Burra and that afternoon I went 33 miles east of Burra to a station called “The Gums” and on return to Burra I was asked by the other doctors to give an anaesthetic. That night I was called to a midwifery case 30 miles north to Hallett. I found it was a difficult case but mother and baby were finally all right. The mother had a small complication which needed an operation so was sent to the Burra Hospital when Dr. Steele returned. 2 days later, I returned to Adelaide to receive my degree of MBBS. The next day I was measured for a Captain’s uniform as I had enlisted as a medical officer in the 11th Field Ambulance of the 3rd Division. The Ambulance was camped at Mitcham under command of Colonel Downey. Doctors were in short supply at that time. The second day, he ordered me to teach 1st Aid to some 120 men in a large marquee. I had never taught Ist Aid but noticed that a number of men were wearing the 1st Aid Badges, so I asked them to teach the men. That afternoon I went in to get a 1st Aid Book now that I have reached 81 years I still teach part of the 1st aid to students in first and last classes of Clare High School in Artificial respiration.

I was fortunate to be selected as House Surgeon at the Adelaide Hospital for 6 months, for which I have always been most grateful. I was under Dr Poulton and he disliked Germans. There was one German airman in the ward with a broken leg and Dr Poulton said “Send him out” so I had to hide him in another ward until his leg had healed. Finally I left the hospital to join my ship the “Nevassa” (wrong ship name here) in Sydney. The first patient I saw had mumps and I did my best to get his medical officer to send him off the ship, but he wouldn’t do it. We thought we were going to Egypt, but England was our destination via Cape Town. A case of meningitis occurred after we reached Cape Town so the whole ships company and soldiers were sent ashore while the ship was properly fumigated. The man with meningitis was sent to the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Cape Town, where he died. We had no further cases of meningitis but the mumps continued to spread. The majority of the men on the ship got mumps and I was one of the sufferers and had a painful journey. On reaching England we were isolated. We soon recovered and toured the surrounding country. Fortunately as a boy I had a pony so enjoyed the horse riding in Salisbury Plain and many a good gallop we had, as all the officers were mounted. Fortunately I was able to get leave and visited my Uncle and Aunt in London and cousins in Broughty Ferry, in Scotland. Finally we went to France and for the first time slept in tents for 3 days. We travelled then by train to a farm near Armentiers. As it was very cold I managed to sleep under some sheaves of hay near a haystack. At Armentiers I was in charge of an Advanced Dressing Station (this had been occupied before the onset of war by a Scotsman and we found he had stacks of magazines in the attic. Also a garden of Strawberries which unfortunately were not ripe whilst we were there. I was moved from there to Advanced Dressing Station near the front line. Things were very quiet. One of my duties was to collect the Rum for the men in the front line. Then I returned to the Main Dressing Station in Armentieres. The RE and I were sent with most of the Ambulance men to be deloused at an unused factory. From Armentiers we were moved for a night to a town near the front line called Ypres. Here I slept the first night in the base of the Police Station. Then up to the front line but there was not a great deal of fighting at the time.

Our dressing place was a German Pillbox erected by the Germans which we had very strongly sand bagged on the German side. We had very few casualties there. When we returned to Ypres, the Colonial had slept for a while in a tent with an opening facing the Germans. When a German shell landed at the foot of the pole neither of our men were injured but I procured another tent with the opening facing away from the Germans.

One afternoon on a march, I heard grumbles behind me “He’s lost his way!” On studying my map I discovered a short road saving us several miles to the village we were going to. Halfway along we came on a mass of ripe blackberries on each side of the road, and my reputation was saved as I gave the order “Break off for 10 minutes” so the men had time to have a good feed of blackberries.

The French at the village were looked after by a returned colonel. He ordered me to go around the village and ask for any damages our men had made. I was warned by one French Madame to be careful at her neighbour’s house. I found a gate post knocked down by one of our vehicles. This good lady had a habit of making a claim from the British for knocking down the post and claiming damages. As I had been warned I reported to the Colonel the fact that the good madame had a habit of having the post replaced in such a way that our wagons could not get into her property without knocking gate post down, so the madame received no cash for her trouble in replacing the post in the bad position.

Then we moved back to near the Front Line just 2 miles back,i n a French village near a wood called Messines. Our engineers were busy building a tunnel under the wood and the village and filled it with plenty of explosives. Our man dressing station was sited near the entrance to the tunnel and was lighted by acetyline gas. These were all extinguished when the tunnel was exploded so we had to stop surgical work. I was due for a week’s leave and was sent to the home of a Duchess. She kept moaning all the time about the great loss of her pheasants, and we could hardly keep a straight face as our French interpreter knew the game keeper. Our Colonel used to give dinners to the Colonels and officers near us, and we usually had pheasants for dinner obtained via our interpreter and the Duchess’s gamekeeper, who was paid for his poaching. She was a friend of the Commander of our Force in Palestine, and she used to read us his letters which were up to date as the Turks retreated. When I returned to the Ambulance we were at a large dressing station. We had a large number of German prisoners.

Soon after this I was given 14 days leave in Paris. Our interpreter gave me an address of an hotel and told me a lot about Paris. The Americans by this time had joined the British. One day I heard a band concert given in a large square by the French, British, and American Bands. Went to Versailles a marvellous place. It was a bit of a jar going back to the Ambulance and Bully beef after the feasts we had in Paris at the Hotel and Restaurants.

We had educated some of our chemists (who made use of disinfectant for wounds) to give anti-tetanus serum to our wounded and the German prisoners. The prisoners could not speak English and became very frightened when the Chemists came around with their syringes. Before the big battles near Ypres part of the larger room in the Dressing station was filled to the ceiling with many “Thomas” leg and arm splints and they were all used up. Nowadays fractures are usually treated by inserting steel pins.

Some young English doctors at this Dressing Station were amazed to see our Australian Privates putting on these splints, which we had taught them to do. Whilst on leave in England I was taken ill with some lung trouble and told I was not to return to France. I was sent on leave to Hatfield House and slept in the Picture Gallery. The next morning the butler asked me “How did you sleep, sir?” I replied “Very well”. The butler replied “Then the ghost didn’t disturb you”.

Sir Henry Newland asked me to give anaesthetics at Sidcup Hospital in Kent where the badly injured soldiers with face wounds were sent. As I was not very busy we played a lot of golf. A number of us gave a cup to the elder members of the Sidcup Golf Club who were very grateful. Sir Henry Newland sent me for training in anaesthetics with a specialist in anaesthetics The chestnuts would drop at night on the wooden roofs.

I returned to Adelaide in 1919 and because of the influenza epidemic the soldiers were quarantined at Torrens Island for a week. After my discharge I went to Sydney and did a tour of the Jenolan Caves and Blue Mountains. As I had no experience with childrens’ illness I applied as House Surgeon at the Children’s Hospital in North Adelaide. Whilst there, Sir Henry Newland asked me to give anaesthetics as I had done in England for him at the Memorial Hospital and also at Keswick Soldiers Hospital at Glenelg. We used to start work at 6.00 a.m.

I used a second hand bellows to pump the ether through a tube to patients nose or mouthpiece. I used to get a very sore hand but after a hunt through Adelaide shops I found a foot bellows used by metal analysers. I still have the apparatus in the local Clare Museum but others are now used.

Dr Geoff Black was my opposite number at the Children’s Hospital. I was there for six months. Whilst there I still continue to give anaesthetics for Sire Henry Newland for the repairs of the face injuries, some at the Memorial Hospital but most at the Keswick Military hospital.

Finally I returned to Clare to join my father and uncle as their assistant. My visiting patients in their own homes was done in a buggy with a white horse. Most of the midwifery cases had their babies at home or at a so called nursing home. A few women went to a private hospital at the east end of Mill Street.

Mr John Richardson, my mother’s father, died in England as most of the family had returned to Adelaide my grandmother and three daughters also returned to Australia. In 1891 my father married Blanch Isabel Richardson, who lived in the house which is now the Memorial Hospital in Adelaide. Mr Richardson was a surveyor and surveyed most of the land for the railways. My parents had 6 children, and 3 of my sisters still live at Windy Brae.”

Other information

Dr Otto’s brother Dr Alfred A Smith joined him when Dr Bain retired and they remained in practice until Dr Otto retired in 1919. Dr. Geoff Wein Smith then took his place and remained in practice in Clare until he retired in 1963.

The first locally owned motor car in Clare was a De Dion Bouton purchased by Dr Otto Wien Smith in 1904 and it caused a sensation where ever it was seen. The clattering monster frightened horses which upended their loads of passengers and freight and them bolted along the road.

The first practical telephone used in Clare connected the home of Dr Otrto Wien Smith to that of his brother Dr Alfred Smith less than a mile away.

Dr Otto was Mayor of Clare from 3 December, 1923 until 1/12/28.

He built Hemley nearly opposite convent, then another house called Prospect House which had been built by Miss Steele a teacher from Bungaree, and used as a school was later bought by Dr Otto Wien Smith and the family lived there – the three girls, Miss Isabel (Daisy to her friends) Miss Wynn, and Miss Jean lived there until they died. It still belongs to the family. A younger sister, Sydney, died as a child.