

Cuscaden, Sir George (1857-1933)

George Cuscaden was born in Wexford, Ireland, the third son of William H Cuscaden, on 31 December 1857. He studied at Dublin University, Edinburgh University and in London attaining medical qualifications which led him to a position as ship's surgeon with the Royal African Mail and later on one of the ships running between Liverpool and New York for the White Star Line.

In 1882, Cuscaden became transport-surgeon with the British military in the Anglo-Egyptian conflict afterwards becoming Colonial Surgeon at Dominica in the West Indies. In Dominica he became ill and returned to Ireland where, on the advice of the doctor at the Colonial Office, he resigned his West Indian post.

Cuscaden came to Australia in the mid 1880s, perhaps spending some time in Adelaide where he married Alice King at St Andrew's Church, Walkerville on 25 August 1886. That same year he came to Port Melbourne and set up practice in Bay Street. He took a great interest in local affairs and was elected to Port Melbourne Council in 1893, serving as Mayor in 1896-97, his final year on Council. Cuscaden was also a magistrate at the Port Melbourne Court and in the early part of the 20th Century was the Health Officer for the town. Around 1906, he left Port Melbourne and moved his practice to Collins Street, Melbourne. In 1912, he was elected to Melbourne City Council unopposed and served as Councillor and then Alderman, from 1929, until his death.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Cuscaden was appointed Principal Medical Officer (PMO) for Victoria. He was well qualified for the role being a Lieutenant-Colonial with the Field Artillery at the time and he had previously received a Volunteer Officers' Decoration (VD) awarded to officers in the United Kingdom's Volunteer Force for at least twenty years meritorious service. On his appointment to PMO, he was promoted to Colonel. Cuscaden was further promoted to General in 1918 and remained in the military after the war, finally retiring in June, 1921. He was knighted, predominately for his war service, two years later.

He was very interested in public health, acting as honorary surgeon to the Women's Hospital and he, or his son Dr G W Cuscaden, had been associated with the hospital for about 40 years when he died in 1933. He was President of the Victorian Branch of the British Medical Association in 1906 and again in 1909. He was Melbourne Council's representation on the board of the Queen's Memorial Infectious Diseases Hospital, on the board of the Heatherton Sanitarium and on the council of the Victorian Baby Health Centres Association. In business, Cuscaden was director of Swallow and Ariell Pty Ltd.

Sir George Cuscaden died suddenly on 6 February 1933. His funeral was attended by all the Councillors and Aldermen from Melbourne. The Lord Mayor received a telegram from the Governor-General, Sir Isaac Isaacs, to convey to relatives his deepest sympathies.

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Source: Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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