



# COOKS HILL

## LIFE SAVING & SURF CLUB

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## Remembering Stanley Wade: “Wadey” of Cook’s Hill LS & SC

John Ramsland (Club Historian)

In late October 1920, nineteen-year-old Stanley Eric Wade of Stockton, an active member of Cook’s Hill Life Saving and Surf Club, took part in the Club’s Amateur Swimming Club weekly carnival held regularly in the Ocean Baths, Newcastle. He swam vigorously in several races on the program as he was wont to do and then returned home to Stockton to have tea with his parents, Mr & Mrs John Wade, and his family. Feeling tired from his exertions in the water, Stanley retired to his bedroom.

The next morning, he was found dead in his bed by his mother who had called him for breakfast. Dr John Harris, the Government Medical Officer, under government requirements, ordered the removal of the body to the morgue for examination. The coroner determined that it was a natural death from heart failure. Such were the unadorned facts.

Stanley’s nephew, the nimble-minded and lively 94-year-old Bob Hick – only two years old at the time of Stanley’s death, has been a faithful custodian of his uncle’s official papers and swimming and lifesaving medals passed down to him from his mother, Stanley’s sister. Bob has now generously donated them to the Cook’s Hill Club for safekeeping.

He and the Club’s honorary historian recently had a fascinating trip down memory lane for an hour or two. Bob is a Second World War veteran who fought in Australia’s first specialised beachhead consolidation and bomb disposal unit, taking part in two major battles. He is devoted to his family and proud of their achievements.

Bob was delighted to find that his uncle had not been left out of the Club’s history, *Cook’s Hill Life Saving & Surf Club. The First Hundred Years*. “Wadey” received an honourable mention on pages 78 & 79.

Stanley Wade’s medals are fascinating historical artefacts. Two are swimming medals in gold metal elaborately trimmed with the victor’s palm leaf. In the centre of each is a relief of a swimmer diving into the pool. They are engraved thus: ‘C.H.S.S.C. [Cook’s Hill Surf Swimming Club] Won by S. Wade 1918-19 [swimming competitive season]’, and ‘N.S.C. & L.S.A. [Northern Swimming Club & Life Saving Association] Rescue Comp<sup>tn</sup> [Competition] S. Wade 14.2.1920’. Both medals denote a club within a club – the Cook’s Hill Surf Amateur Swimming Club within the broader Cook’s Hill Life Saving and Surf Club which conducted a still-water and handicapped swimming completion at Ocean Baths. This competition was seen as maintaining and improving the physical fitness of amateur lifesavers.

Stanley's two other medals are bronze, engraved with his name – the Surf Life Saving Society's 'For Proficiency in reel and line and belt work' medal awarded on 7.12.1919, and the Royal Life Saving Society's medal awarded on 2.3.1919 [the original Bronze Medallion]. All four medals indicate Stanley Wade's marked proficiency as a highly competent yet youthful amateur surf lifesaver who was also an outstanding still-water swimmer.

Bob Hick had the four medals stored in a small wooden box shaped to look like a miniature book with a secret opening device to the inside drawer – a piece of Stanley's superb craftsmanship when he worked for J. Mackie & Co, Furniture & Bedding Manufacturers of 451-459 Hunter Street. Julie Hazelwood, Bob's daughter, is the proud owner of a beautifully crafter book cupboard made by "Wadey" in the 1910s as part of his apprenticeship as a furniture-maker and carpenter.

So there are several memories of Stanley's short but meritorious life.

The funeral was a massive one in the usual Novocastrian style for an honoured and prominent son. The pall bearers were Cook's Hill boys and representatives of several other sporting bodies were in attendance: the Northern Swimming Association, the Royal Life Saving Society and kindred organisation. A wreath was laid by the Cook's Hill Life Saving and Surf Club. Stanley Wade is buried in the Church of England Section of Sandgate Cemetery.

One of the races in the swimming competition was named the S. Wade Memorial Handicap, and initiated at the Ocean Baths in the 1923/24 season.

David Thompson, CHSLSC's founder, presented the Panegyric at the funeral service:

*If I had been asked a week ago who was the most exemplary member [of Cook's Hill] and the fellow we should endeavour to emulate, I should without any equivocation have answered "Wadey". If some generous donor had provided a reward for one possessing all the attributes of a gentleman and wanted his name, I should again have had to reiterate "Wadey"... He had a wide knowledge of and a practical sympathy for humanity, which was exemplified by the humane work he was engaged in while a member of the Cook's Hill Life Saving Club ... His greatest joy was to do something for someone else, that was his idealism, his humanity. His capacity for unselfishness and self denial was unbounded, and this was proven by his many activities associated with the Club, and endorsed in his work in saving human life.*