

Australian Jewish Historical Society

JOURNAL AND PROCEEDINGS.

Vol. IV.

1957.

Part VI.

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General Sir John Monash : Scholar, Engineer and Soldier

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(Read before the Victorian Branch, 28th August, 1957.)

John Monash's parents were Jewish.¹ His father, Louis Monash, was born in 1831 at Krotoschin in Prussian Poland. He came to Australia in 1853 to seek his fortune on the goldfields, but, according to John Monash, his father "never went to the goldfields, but established a merchant's business in Melbourne." At a date which is not known, Louis Monash became a partner in a firm of softgoods importers known as Martin and Monash, who carried on business at 19 Little Collins Street, Melbourne. Louis Monash returned to Europe sometime in 1862 to buy stock and to visit his relatives in Prussia. There, in 1863, at Stettin, a Prussian town on the Baltic Sea, he married Bertha Manasse, who was the sister of his brother's wife. Louis Monash, accompanied by his wife, then returned to the Colony of Victoria. They sailed from Liverpool on the 11th February, 1864, in the *Empire of Peace* and landed in Melbourne on the 5th June, 1864.²

John Monash was born in the following year. He was born at 1 Rachel Terrace, Dudley Street, West Melbourne, on the 23rd June, 1865. He said the year before he died, that: "I was born . . . in a terrace of houses which are still standing overlooking the Flagstaff Hill, so named because one of the earliest Government Houses stood on the hill, and on its flagstaff a flag was flown whenever the English mail arrived in port." John Monash, who was the eldest and only son of a family of three children,³ spent the first nine years of his life in Melbourne.

The first school he attended was St. Stephen's School at Docker's Hill in Richmond,⁴ where the attention of the

headmaster⁵ was attracted by his capacity in English literary subjects and that of the boys by his skill in amusing them with drawings.

In 1874, John Monash's father went into business in the remote country town of Jerilderie in New South Wales. There John Monash became a pupil of Mr. William Elliott,⁶ who was a teacher—presumably at the local State school. Mr. Elliott exercised a strong influence on the moulding of John Monash's character. In the year before his death, Monash said that: "During the three years of our sojourn in New South Wales, I had, as a growing boy, a vividly interesting experience of country life, learning to ride, and also much bushcraft. The teacher at the local school was William Elliott, who took a personal interest in me and taught me many things outside the school curriculum, such as the higher mathematics and so on. Mr. Elliott gave up school-teaching in the early 'eighties and became a newspaper proprietor, . . . He is still alive and in robust health, and remembers me with affection."

After a residence of about three years at Jerilderie, Mrs. Monash, at the suggestion of Mr. Elliott, brought her three children back to Melbourne⁷ for the continuance there of their education in surroundings with better educational opportunities.

John Monash was enrolled at Scotch College in Melbourne on the 9th October, 1877. The impressive bluestone buildings of the College in those days stood in Lansdowne Street facing Fitzroy Gardens. The Principal of the College was Dr. Alexander Morrison, M.A., LL.D. Monash's scholastic record at this College was a distinguished one. He passed the matriculation examination in 1879 at the age of 14 years. Monash left Scotch College in December, 1881. In that year he obtained at a public examination first-class honours in French and German, as well as an exhibition in Mathematics valued at £25; he was, with James S. Thomson, Dux of the College; and he was also Dux in Mathematics.⁸

John Monash decided to continue his education at the University of Melbourne. He entered this University in March, 1882, as an undergraduate in the Faculty of Arts.

Reading was only one of the methods John Monash employed, during his student days, for widening and deepening the scope of his knowledge. He attended sittings at Law Courts to hear legal arguments, and visited Parlia-

ment House to listen there to debates; he was prominent in debating societies; and he took regular lessons in painting; he wrote articles, including letters, to newspapers. He acquired much skill as a woodworker and as a pianist; and he had a great passion for music.⁹ He became intensely interested in engineering construction, at about 18 years of age, and walked about Melbourne to watch the erection of buildings and the operation of dredges.

MONASH BECOMES AN ENGINEER

In the year 1884, Monash had, for financial reasons, to suspend his course at the University of Melbourne and seek employment.

He obtained a position with the engineering company of David Munro and Company Limited, 154 Queen Street, Melbourne, as a junior member of its engineering staff. There he worked under Mr. George Higgins. This company had begun at this time, or was about to begin, the construction of the present Prince's Bridge across the Yarra River in the City of Melbourne.¹⁰ Monash was helped in this work by having had at the University some instruction in surveying,¹¹ and within two years he was given charge of the earthworks, both on the shore and in the river bed, and of the whole of the masonry.¹²

It can only be presumed that Monash was present at the ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the new Prince's Bridge, which was performed by the Mayoress of Melbourne (Mrs. J. C. Stewart) on Tuesday, 7th September, 1886.

Early in the year 1887, Monash obtained a position as engineer-in-charge of construction works, with a firm of contractors who were building that part of the Outer Circle Railway which linked Fairfield Park with Oakleigh. At this time he was only 22 years of age.

Of that section of the Outer Circle Railway on which Monash was employed, it was said, in a Melbourne newspaper in March, 1890, that:

The last section of what is still called the Outer Circle railway is now being constructed.¹³ It extends from Fairfield, on the Alphington and Heidelberg line, to a point between Oakleigh and Murrumbeena, a total distance of 9½ miles. This section is carried closely upon the line surveyed by Mr. Higginbotham. It crosses the Yarra behind the Kew Lunatic Asylum and runs thence to Normanby-road and then in a straight line to the Lilydale line, which it crosses at right angles between Hawthorn and Camberwell, running through

Hartwell, and after crossing Gardiner's Creek joins the Gippsland line. About a mile from this junction a branch, five miles long, is being constructed to Burnely. The cost of this section for permanent way only is £58,169, and for the section of the Outer Circle between Fairfield and Oakleigh,⁴¹ £125,016. The latter contract should have been completed in September, 1889, but is still unfinished, and will probably remain so for six months longer.¹⁵

As far as can be ascertained, Monash finished his work on the Outer Circle Railway sometime in the year 1891.

It was a time of great financial distress. By the beginning of 1891, a financial spectre began to haunt large sections of the community in Victoria, and indeed throughout Australia. Yet despite the financial crisis of 1891 and his, no doubt, onerous duties as Engineer-in-Charge of the construction works of that section of the Outer Circle Railway from Fairfield Park to Oakleigh, Monash found time to prepare himself for academic honours. On 4th April, 1891, he graduated at the University of Melbourne as a Bachelor of Engineering and, in addition, he was awarded "The Argus" Scholarship. But he did not terminate his academic studies at this point, as so many others do after obtaining a first degree in one or other of the faculties of a university. As this story unfolds it will be seen that he was to continue his academic studies throughout his life. Two years after receiving the degree of Bachelor of Engineering, Monash was admitted, on the 18th March, 1893, to the degree of Master of Civil Engineering at the same university.

EMPLOYMENT WITH THE MELBOURNE HARBOUR TRUST

Monash was appointed to the staff of the Melbourne Harbour Trust on 20th July, 1892, as a draughtsman in its Engineering Branch, which was in charge of the Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. A. M. Alexander.¹⁶

If there was an interval between the termination of his employment with the contractors for the Fairfield Park-Oakleigh railway line and the commencement of his employment with the Melbourne Harbour Trust, neither the duration of this interval nor the way in which Monash employed the time during this interval is now known.

At the time Monash joined the Melbourne Harbour Trust it was organised into three branches, namely, the Administrative Branch, the Nautical Branch and the Engineering Branch. Its offices were situated at 475 Collins Street, Melbourne.¹⁷

Monash said in 1930, of his work with the Melbourne Harbour Trust during the period 1892-1894, that: "I designed many of the works now extant in the Port of Melbourne, such as the transit sheds on the Yarra wharves, the Maribyrnong Swing Bridge,¹⁸ and many roads, drainage schemes, and the like. During this period, I further qualified as Municipal Surveyor,¹⁹ as Engineer for Water Supply,²⁰ and as Patent Attorney."

The year 1893 opened in Victoria in an economic atmosphere of strained expectancy. In the first month, on 30th January, the Federal Bank of Australia Limited, with its head office in Collins Street, Melbourne, suspended payments,²¹ and further financial disasters in Victoria followed.

As a consequence of the resultant economic depression, the Melbourne Harbour Trust had to reduce its staff, and Monash was among those who were retrenched. It is probable that his employment with the Melbourne Harbour Trust was terminated in 1894, sometime before 30th June.²²

MONASH GOES INTO PRIVATE PRACTICE

Monash was, in the year 1894, twenty-nine years of age, married²³ and unemployed. But he faced the depression by going into private practice in that year as a Consulting Engineer and Patent Attorney.

He went into partnership with Mr. J. T. N. Anderson,²⁴ and they opened their office at 49 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.²⁵ Monash was to remain in private practice in Melbourne for the next twenty years,²⁶ that is, until the outbreak of war in August, 1914.

From 1896 onwards, he specialised in constructional work in reinforced concrete. He quickly built up a large practice in this branch of engineering. Monash said that "the practice of reinforced concrete (engineering) in Australia dated from 1896 and in Victoria from 1898".²⁷ It was said that his knowledge of the French and German languages was "a powerful aid" to him in studying the subject of reinforced concrete, for in those days most of the articles on this subject were to be found only in journals which were printed in those languages.

Monash's professional standing rose rapidly in private practice. He had studied Law²⁸ in order, it has been said, to interest himself, as an Engineer, in arbitration work. He soon built up a large Australia-wide connection as a



AT THE OPENING OF THE N.S.W. JEWISH WAR MEMORIAL, 11th November, 1923
 Left to Right: Mr. S. (later Sir Samuel) Cohen, Lieut-General Sir John Monash, Mr. John Goulston, Mrs. J. J. Cohen, Mr. Orwell Phillips, Judge Cohen, Commander Victor Cohen.
 (From the *Australian Jewish Historical Society*, Melbourne, 1991)

consultant, an expert witness and an arbitrator in engineering litigation. As an expert witness in courts of law he was much sought after, and he figured in many notable cases, some of which went to the Privy Council in London, where they were decided largely on his evidence.²⁹

Two particular cases in which he appeared as an expert witness were the Water Rights dispute between two pastoralists in the Riverina in New South Wales, John Hutchinson Blackwood and David McCaughey (1898) and the drainage case in Victoria, Jaan Kannuluik v. the Mayor, etc., of Hawthorn, in the year 1903.

The case of Blackwood v. McCaughey was an action brought by the plaintiff (Blackwood) against the defendant (McCaughey) for damage done to the plaintiff's land and stock prior to 1st November, 1896. The plaintiff, who was the owner of Booabula Station in the Murrumbidgee district, sued the defendant, who owned Coree Station in the same district, to recover compensation to the amount of £10,000 for the loss he had sustained by the defendant's having constructed two dams upon his property which interfered with the natural flow of the Yanco and Billabong Creeks and deprived plaintiff thereby of the use of the water.³⁰ Exceedingly strong counsel were retained by both the plaintiff and the defendant. The senior counsel for the plaintiff (Blackwood) was Sir Julian Salomons, the recognised leader of the New South Wales Bar; the leading counsel for the defendant (McCaughey) was the Attorney-General, J. H. Want. The plaintiff also engaged, as an expert witness, the consulting engineer, Major John McNash, of Melbourne.³¹

The case was heard in the Banco Court in Sydney before the Chief Justice, Sir Frederick Darley, and a jury of twelve. At the hearing of the case on Thursday, 17th March, 1898, Monash, as a witness for the plaintiff, began his evidence by saying: "I am a civil engineer and carry on business in Melbourne. I have had considerable experience in hydraulic engineering. I have made several visits to the district, in which the Billabong and Yanco are, in connection with surveys, but apart from that I have known the district for many years. I was up there in July and October, 1897, and in March, 1898. I have examined the Billabong and Yanco across from Wanganella up to the Murrumbidgee".³²

After a hearing which lasted thirteen days, this case was brought to a close on Wednesday, 1st June, 1898. The Chief Justice took less than an hour and a half in summing up; the jury, after having retired for about the same period, gave a verdict in favour of the plaintiff with damages for the amount of £2,000.³³

In the case of *Kannuluik v. the Mayor, etc.*, of Hawthorn in 1903, Monash and Bernard Smith appeared as expert witnesses for the plaintiff (*Kannuluik*). This case has been summarised in the following words: "A municipality employing an efficient, skilful engineer constructed a drain within its district under the powers conferred by the Local Government Act, 1890. This drain was of insufficient capacity to carry off the water drainage and offensive matter that flowed into it, and in times of heavy rain caused damage to the plaintiff. It was held by the Full Court that the municipality was liable for the damages thus caused".³⁴ A reserved judgment, with a verdict in favour of the plaintiff, was given in the Supreme Court in Melbourne on Wednesday, 14th October, 1903. It was said that this case became a leading one on the question of the liability of local government authorities in connection with the drainage and flooding of land.³⁵

But Monash found litigation work somewhat distasteful, and he seems to have gradually withdrawn from this particular field.

He had some connection with the building of the Morell Bridge over the Yarra River in line with Anderson Street, Melbourne—near the Botanic Gardens. The memorial stone of this bridge was laid by the Minister of Public Works, the Hon. J. W. Tavenor, M.L.A., on Friday, 24th February, 1899. It was probably opened for traffic later that year. The bridge was constructed of concrete, on the monier system, and the contract price for the work was £5,700, which was paid by the Government of Victoria and the Council of the City of Melbourne.³⁶ It was said of Monash's engineering practice that this bridge "was the forerunner of a very large and extensive practice in bridge building and general engineering construction, mainly in reinforced concrete, which extended beyond Victoria into South Australia and Tasmania".³⁷

Monash received many jobs in other States of Australia. Some of these jobs were connected with the construction of the railway from Bundaberg to Gladstone in

Queensland, the Mullewa to Cue railway in Western Australia, the Kelly Basin to Gormanston railway in Tasmania, and he designed the King River Bridge on the railway line from Burnie to Zeehan.³⁸

As a step towards the more efficient development of this reinforced concrete industry, Monash founded in Victoria, in the year 1901, a company known as "The Monier Pipe Company Proprietary Limited",³⁹ with its registered office in Oliver's Lane, off 138 Flinders Street, Melbourne.⁴⁰ There were originally three Directors and five Shareholders of this Company. David Mitchell,⁴¹ the father of Dame Nellie Melba, was the Chairman of Directors; John Gibson was the Managing Director; and John Monash was a Director.⁴² The original Shareholders of the Company were Joshua Thomas Noble Anderson, John Gibson, David Mitchell, John Monash, and Edward Albert Newbiggin. Newbiggin was also the original Secretary of the Company. One of the objects of this Company was: "To acquire and exercise all the rights now held by Messrs. Monash and Anderson of Melbourne in the State of Victoria under an agreement with Messrs. Gummow, Forrest and Coy. Ltd. of Sydney in the State of New South Wales dated 16th day of September 1901 so far as relates to the manufacture, use and sale of monier pipes of any type or design covered by Letters Patent numbered 15298".⁴³

After some years of difficult and often discouraging experimental work with reinforced concrete, Monash succeeded in establishing this new industry in Australia.⁴⁴

In the year 1910, Monash went overseas on private business soon after Lord Kitchener's visit to Australia. Monash sailed from Melbourne on Wednesday, 23rd March, 1910,⁴⁵ in the R.M.S. *Otranto* for England. He also visited the Continent and returned to Australia via the United States of America. He arrived back in Melbourne by train from Sydney on Wednesday, 2nd November, 1910.⁴⁶

A technical engineering lecture, illustrated with lantern slides, on the results of this trip overseas was given by Monash in Melbourne on 5th April, 1911, to members of the Victorian Institute of Engineers. The lecture was entitled "Some Impressions of Travel",⁴⁷ and Monash concluded it with these words:

One cannot return from a tour through the principal countries of the world without carrying back the strong impression that the present century belongs to the engineer, and that, although much has been achieved, much scope remains for further development. In

particular, I would say that, situated as we are, so far from the centres of professional activity, a serious burden of responsibility is cast upon the Australian engineer to keep himself as well as he can, by diligent perusal of technical literature, abreast of the rapid expansion of his profession in the older world.⁴⁸

It is recorded in the Calendar of the University of Melbourne for the year 1913 that Sir Thomas a'Beckett, having served on the Council of the University for upwards of twenty-five years, did not seek re-election on the expiration of his term of office in May, 1912, and that Lieutenant-Colonel John Monash, B.A., LL.B., M.C.E., was elected to fill this vacancy.

Monash had always kept in close touch with University life in various capacities. He had been an honorary examiner of the School of Engineering at the University for a number of years previously. It was said in October, 1912, that: "Some changes have just been decided upon by the Engineering Faculty in regard to co-examiners in Civil Engineering subjects."⁴⁹ Colonel Monash, M.C.E., etc., as an expert in reinforced concrete, will in future examine in Civil Engineering, Part I, which includes that subject. He formerly examined in Civil Engineering, Part II.⁵⁰ He had also given courses of lectures in hydraulic engineering and on reinforced concrete in the School of Engineering. It was said in October, 1912, that: "One of the tendencies of our time is the greater specialisation which is being introduced into courses of engineering studies at universities. In this connection we welcome the introduction of specialists as lecturers in our School. Not only have we recently added to our staff Lecturers in Electrical Engineering, and in Engineering Design and Drawing, but we now have Colonel John Monash, M.C.E., delivering a series of addresses on reinforced concrete."⁵¹

Monash had been an active member of the Victorian Institute of Engineers since 1904. This Institute had been founded in Melbourne in 1883, and at its Annual General Meeting in Melbourne on 17th April, 1912, Monash was elected unopposed to its office of President. In his introductory speech, as the new President, Monash said that the success of a body like theirs depended not on the President alone—not on the Council alone, but more largely than upon any other factor upon the individual members. It was from the members that the governing body drew its inspiration and authority, and it depended on the individual support of every member of the Institute, whether

the Institute as a whole would succeed. There were certain directions in which the members could help, and accord to the Council and the President even greater support than in the past. One was in the direction of the monthly meetings. In those meetings every member could help, chiefly by making it a point of honour to attend whenever possible; secondly, by coming forward with papers and lectures on subject matters of their own practice, which were certain to be of interest to other members; and lastly, by discussing freely all the papers and subjects brought before them. If that could be done in a greater measure than in the past, he thought that the coming session would be successful.⁵²

Monash remained in office as the Institute's President for the succeeding years of 1913, 1914 and 1915 also.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Institute in 1913, which was held in Melbourne on Wednesday, 5th March, 1913, Monash delivered Presidential Address on the subject of "The Engineering Profession in Australia".⁵³ In the following year his Presidential Address to the Institute, which was delivered in Melbourne in April, 1914, was on the subject of "The Theory and Practice of Reinforced Concrete Construction".⁵⁴ This was probably the last occasion that Monash addressed the Institute as its President, although he was to retain that office for two more years.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Victorian Institute of Engineers in Melbourne on Wednesday, 29th March, 1916, the retiring President, Brigadier-General Monash, was absent. He was then serving overseas in command of the 4th Australian Infantry Brigade of the Australian Imperial Force. At this meeting, Professor Henry Payne,⁵⁵ the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Melbourne, moved: "That this meeting of members of the Victorian Institute of Engineers places on record its high esteem for, and its thanks to, the retiring President, General Monash,⁵⁶ for the able manner in which he has fulfilled the presidential functions during his term of office and for the brilliant way in which he upheld the glory of Australia in the military operations at the front in the great war on behalf of the Empire".⁵⁷

But let us return for a moment to a review of the events which followed the outbreak of war in August, 1914, and to Monash's relationship to these events.

THE WAR OF 1914-18

With the outbreak of the War of 1914-18 in August, 1914, the most spectacular part of Monash's career began.

On 15th September, 1914, he was appointed to the A.I.F. and posted to the command of the 4th Infantry Brigade of that force. He was promoted later, but with effect on and from this date, to the rank of Brigadier-General. He sailed from Australia with his Brigade in December, 1914. It disembarked at Alexandria on 1st February, 1915. There the 4th Australian Infantry Brigade became part of Major-General Sir Alexander Godley's New Zealand and Australian Division. This Division was part of Lieutenant-General Sir William Birdwood's Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.

Monash subsequently took the 4th Infantry Brigade to Gallipoli. He commanded it there throughout the campaign, which began on Sunday, 25th April, 1915, and after the withdrawal of the A.I.F. from Gallipoli in December, 1915, he took the Brigade back to Egypt.

On 2nd June, 1916, Monash sailed from Alexandria, with the 4th Infantry Brigade, for France. He reached Marseilles and disembarked the Brigade there on 7th June, 1916.

But a month after Monash's arrival in France he became a divisional commander. On 10th July, 1916, he was appointed to command the 3rd Australian Division and promoted to the rank of Major-General. A British corps commander subsequently expressed the opinion that Monash was the best divisional commander he had met on the Western Front.

Monash was appointed on 1st June, 1918, to command the Australian Army Corps, with the rank of Lieutenant-General, vice General Sir William Birdwood, who had been appointed to command the Fifth British Army but retained command of the A.I.F.

The Australian Army Corps became an instrument for offensive military operations which, for size and striking power, exceeded all other corps in the war of 1914-18.

After the Armistice, which began on 11th November, 1918, came the great tasks of repatriation and demobilization.

Monash was appointed Director-General of the Department of Repatriation and Demobilization on 1st December, 1918, with Headquarters in London at 54 Victoria Street.

He said: "I finally left France on 30th November and I took up duties in London the next morning, Sunday, 1st December".⁵⁸

Twelve months after the Armistice, Monash had completed his great task in London. On the eve of his departure from England for Australia, he said in a press interview that:

I have been away from home for five years, but the last nine months have been much more strenuous than the four years of war. Demobilization proved a stupendous task. I was hardly allowed breathing time. But it is now practically completed so far as I am concerned. I can return believing that the best possible use has been made of the meagre facilities that existed.⁵⁹

On Saturday, 15th November, 1919, Monash and Birdwood sailed from London in the *Ormonde* for Australia.

General Birdwood, who did not relinquish the appointment of General Officer Commanding the Australian Imperial Forces until 10th September, 1920, had been invited by the Australian Government to visit Australia. He disembarked at Perth and remained in Western Australia for about a month before he came on to Melbourne.

Monash arrived in Melbourne on Friday, 26th December, 1919. Six months after his return to Australia he was demobilized. His services in the A.I.F. were terminated on 13th June, 1920.

Thereafter, until his retirement from the Army ten years later, he remained on the Unattached List of the Australian Military Forces.⁶⁰

THE POST-WAR YEARS

In March, 1918, the first Victorian Government to be led by H. S. W. Lawson was formed. One of the most important matters of concern to the new Premier was that of the Report of the Advisory Committee on Brown Coal. In his policy speech at Castlemaine on Thursday, 27th June, 1918,⁶¹ Lawson declared that it was his Government's intention to introduce in the forthcoming session of Parliament a Bill for the creation of a State power system which was to be managed by a body of men who had the necessary technical and business knowledge to co-ordinate the supply of electricity in Victoria. As a further step in the execution of this policy, the Electricity Commissioners' Bill was submitted to Parliament on 10th December, 1918, and it received the Royal Assent on 7th January, 1919.

The terms of this Act called for the appointment of three part-time Commissioners, each for a period not exceeding seven years. On 4th March, 1919, the first three Commissioners were appointed. They were Emeritus Professor T. R. Lyle, who was the Chairman, the Hon. George Swinburne, and Archibald McKinstry, who resigned four months later and was succeeded by Sir Robert Gibson.

Towards the end of 1920, the work of the first Commissioners had increased so much that they recommended the addition of a full-time chairman to their number. Monash was persuaded by the Government of Victoria to accept the position of General Manager on the understanding that he would be appointed full-time chairman as soon as the necessary amending legislation was enacted. By an Order-in-Council, made on 28th September, 1920, Monash was appointed General Manager "for the purpose of the undertaking of the Electricity Commissioners . . . to be installed and carried out by the Commissioners in the neighbourhood of Morwell and the distribution of electricity therefrom approved by Order-in-Council on the second day of July, 1920, at a salary, at the rate of £3,000 per annum, payable monthly; such appointment to be for a term of five years dating from the first day of October, 1920".⁶² It has been said that: "Sir John Monash's decision to undertake the work illustrates that high sense of public duty which, with his genius as an organiser and administrator, was to endow the State undertaking with much of his own prestige, and which was to give him the pivotal place in its history. He could, with much greater financial advantage to himself, have commercialised both his genius and prestige in the engineering and general business life of Australia. He preferred to give his services to his fellow Australians in peace as he had done in war".⁶³

In 1920, a new Act⁶⁴ changed the title "Electricity Commissioners" to the "State Electricity Commission of Victoria" and provided for the appointment of Monash as full-time Chairman at a salary of £3,000 per annum. He took office, as Chairman, on 1st January, 1921, and was assisted by three part-time Commissioners, namely, Professor T. R. Lyle, George Swinburne and Sir Robert Gibson. From then on, until his death on 8th October, 1931, the Commission had the full benefit of Monash's "genius, his amazing industry, decisiveness, and zeal for the public good and the welfare of the State".⁶⁵

Monash worked tirelessly from the outset as Chairman of the State Electricity Commission. In this position he built up quietly, and in the face of great difficulties, a huge electricity undertaking.

On 5th February, 1921, the first sod was turned at the site of the power station at Yallourn, and on 24th June, 1924, the City of Melbourne received its first supply of electricity from the power station at Yallourn. The winning of brown coal from the open cut at Yallourn began on 21st August, 1924.

At the request of members of the Legislative Council of Victoria, Monash met members of the Legislative Council and Local Government representatives in the Committee Room of the Legislative Council on Tuesday evening, 9th December, 1924, to give them information about the "Melbourne Electric Supply Company Bill",⁶⁶ which was at that time being considered by the Legislative Council, and to answer questions put to him about this Bill.⁶⁷ This meeting was presided over by the President of the Legislative Council, the Hon. Frank Clarke.

The year 1929 marked the end of the first decade of the history of the State Electricity Commission. It had been a decade of great achievement for the Commission. It was said that: "The Commission served practically the whole of the metropolitan area, 141 country towns and centres—95 of which had no supply previously—and hundreds of farmers in various parts of the State. . . . The briquetting factory was producing about 500 tons of industrial and domestic briquettes a day, and on what had, ten years previously, been uncleared bush, stood Yallourn itself, a well-designed, self-contained town of over 400 houses".⁶⁸

Despite the pressure of his work as Chairman of the State Electricity Commission, Monash never lost interest in other public duties which he was called upon to perform from time to time and in the academic life of the University of Melbourne.

Amid a gathering of brilliantly robed graduates in Wilson Hall at the University of Melbourne on Monday, 22nd March, 1920, General Monash and General Birdwood were admitted "by special grace" to the degree of Doctor of Laws for distinguished public service. A press report⁶⁹ of the ceremony described the two Generals as wearing scarlet robes over khaki uniforms. On Saturday afternoon,

23rd April, 1921, the University of Melbourne conferred on Monash the degree of Doctor of Engineering. The thesis which he had submitted for this degree was of a character not usually associated with post-graduate research. It was his well-known book, "The Australian Victories in France in 1918," which dealt with the application of engineering to modern warfare and had been published in London in the previous year. Two years later, on 2nd July, 1923, Monash was elected to the office of Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, and he retained that office until his death eight years later.⁷⁰

Monash was the President of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, which was held in Adelaide in August, 1924. At this meeting he delivered, on Monday evening, 25th August, 1924, his Presidential Address⁷¹ on the subject of "Power and Development." He said in this address, with characteristic modesty, that: "I am oppressed by the consciousness that I cannot justly claim to be a man of science in any literal sense. My lot has been cast in places in which philosophic inquiry has had to remain subordinate to the task of utilizing the teachings of philosophy for practical ends. I have 'reaped where others have sown.' Both in peace and in war, my claim to be considered a representative of Science can rest solely upon the consideration that the principles which I have had to apply are those which Science has evolved for the service of mankind."

Monash's integrity, his knowledge of mankind, his judgment of men and his attitude to social problems inspired great public confidence in him as a citizen. It was because of these qualities, no doubt, that he was invited by the Commonwealth Government in 1923 to report⁷² on the cost of constructing a 10,000-ton cruiser in Australia, and by the Government of Victoria in 1924 to be the Chairman of a Royal Commission to inquire into "the general state, efficiency and condition of the Police Force prior to November, 1923".⁷³

One of the last honours to be conferred on Monash was an engineering one. At the Fortieth Meeting of the Council of the Institution of Engineers of Australia, which took place at the Institution's headquarters in Sydney on Wednesday, 27th November, 1929, under the chairmanship of the Institution's President at that time, Mr. D. F. J.

Harricks, Monash was awarded the Institution's highest honour, namely, the Peter Nicol Russell Memorial Medal, in recognition of his notable contribution to the science and practice of Engineering.⁷⁴

THE LAST POST

After an illness of about ten days' duration, Monash died at his residence, "Tona," in St. George's Road, Toorak, on Thursday morning, 8th October, 1931, in his sixty-sixth year.

The Commissioners of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria summed up his career as its Chairman in the following words:

With deep sorrow and a sense of immeasurable loss, the Commission records the death, on the 8th October, 1931, of its distinguished Chairman, General Sir John Monash, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., V.D., B.A., D.C.L., LL.D., D.Eng., M.Inst.C.E.

First as General Manager and then as Chairman, the Commission had the full benefit of his genius and prestige; and Victoria's national scheme of brown coal development and electricity supply is, and will be regarded always as a monument to his capacity for organization and administration, his amazing industry and his zeal for the public welfare and the advancement of the State.

Great even in small things, and pre-eminent in great things, Sir John Monash left behind him a record alike distinguished as a leader in peace and war. To those associated with him, his success in all he undertook caused no surprise. It was but the natural corollary of a rich store of useful knowledge, applied with a thoroughness which left nothing to chance. He was an idealist, with a practical constructive mind, and he planned and builded in orderly sequence. In all he did, the qualities of courage, initiative, and industry were combined with an infinite capacity for taking pains. And having set his course, he followed it with lofty singleness of purpose, seeing only the good of the public as the final objective.

The impress of his genius upon what is popularly known as the Yallourn scheme will last for all time; and the Commission is firmly of the opinion that the continued success of the scheme is dependent upon adherence to the policy and principles which he did so much to frame and which he upheld as a shining exemplar of the spirit of service. Besides giving service, he possessed the supreme gift of inspiring it in others, not simply as a reaction of his own devotion to duty, but by an impelling and gracious personality, and by a genuine recognition of all on his staff, from the highest to the lowest, as co-operators with him in the work to be done. Between himself and his staff there was a bond of very deep affection, and to everyone throughout the Commission's service his death came, not simply as the removal of an able official head, but as the loss of a well-loved chief, whose amiable and distinguished qualities made him as much revered as he was honoured.⁷⁵

John Monash was given a State Funeral on Sunday, 11th October, 1931, by the Commonwealth Government.⁷⁶

His remains, borne on a horse-drawn gun carriage, set out on their last journey from Parliament House in Spring Street, through the City of Melbourne via Collins Street and Swanston Street, then along St. Kilda Road, to High Street and out to Brighton Cemetery for interment. Great crowds lined the route in silence to witness the military honours that were paid, with all due pomp and ceremony, for the last time to one of Australia's pre-eminent citizens and to the greatest commander in war that Australia has produced.

The service at the graveside began at 4.30 p.m. It was a poignant and simple one, and was conducted according to Jewish rites by Rabbi Israel Brodie and Chaplain the Rev. J. Danglow. The service concluded with an oration by Chaplain Danglow, in which he said of John Monash, that: "No man ever bore a constantly increasing burden of civic responsibility with greater cheerfulness or in a more sacrificing spirit".⁷⁷

MONASH : THE MAN AND HIS CHARACTERISTICS

This outline of Monash's life creates only an imperfect picture of the man. The incompleteness of this picture is like that of an engraving of a portrait in colours; it is an incompleteness which lacks the original's richness in colour and in detail. But a biographer must do the best he can in the time available and with the information at his disposal, for an incomplete picture is better than no picture.

John Monash, was, of course, a many-sided and much more complex personality than that which is embodied in the idea of either a great soldier or a great engineer.

In war and in peace, Monash's highly trained mind, his great organizing and administrative capacity, his drive and his initiative, his gifts for making sound judgments and prompt decisions carried him quickly to the front ranks in civil and in military life. He gained a reputation in his civil and military careers for his great powers of exposition, for his thoroughness and for his great capacity for taking pains. In his operational and administrative planning during the War of 1914-18, no detail was too small for him to examine if its neglect might introduce a risk in the execution of the plan. His keynote was at all times "efficiency and punctuality."

The world at large knew John Monash best as a great soldier; the engineering world knew him as a practical

man of science, with a remarkable skill in design and with an outstanding capacity in the field for the organization of work and the execution of plans; the University of Melbourne knew him as a great student from his undergraduate years till his death in the office of its Vice-Chancellor. But even among those who knew him best there were perhaps only a few who had measured the enormous scope of his knowledge and had surveyed the wide diversity of his interests.

But John Monash was, whatever may be said of his complex personality and the wide diversity of his interests, a modest man who was never intoxicated by success. He did not court success, honours and esteem; they came to him unsolicited, and he enjoyed them without pride and without affectation.

John Monash's work has, as it already had in his lifetime, the assurance of long and fruitful survival. But the immortality of a man of genius, like John Monash, lies not only, nor mainly, in the work which he leaves for posterity to contemplate and to enjoy, but also in the activity which this work inspires in future generations.

NOTES

¹ I am much indebted to Dr. C. E. W. Bean's *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*, Vol. 6, chapter 6, for factual information about General Monash's family and early life. See also p. 333 of this Part of the *Journal*.

² See *The Age*, Monday, 6th June, 1864, p. 4.

³ John Monash's two sisters were Miss Mathilde Monash, who was born at Church Street, Richmond, in 1869, and Miss Louise Monash, who was born at Clifton Street, Richmond, in 1873, and in 1901 married Dr. Walter Rosenhain.

⁴ Probably "St. Stephen's School, No. 527," Richmond, Victoria.

⁵ Probably Mr. R. A. Armstrong.

⁶ Mr. William Elliott, Born 30th June, 1852. Died 13th February, 1934.

⁷ Louis Monash remained in Jerilderie but later moved to Narrandera. He rejoined his family in Melbourne in 1883 and died there in 1894.

⁸ See *History of Scotch College, Melbourne, 1851-1925*, for details of College prizes, etc., won by Monash.

⁹ See *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*, Vol. 6, p. 201.

¹⁰ See *The Age*, Friday, 5th October, 1888, p. 11, which said: "On the 29th May, 1885, tenders for the new bridge were invited, and the tenders were opened on 27th August, 1885, the lowest being that of Mr. David Muuro for £136,998. The contract was signed on 16th November, 1885."

¹¹ It seems that Monash intended, as an Arts student, to proceed to an Engineering course, for he took two Engineering subjects in addition to the second year of the Arts course in 1884.

¹² See *The Age*, Thursday, 29th July, 1886, p. 6, which said: "A large staff is necessarily employed by the contractor on this work, the various portions of which are under the superintendence of capable men. There are four engineers—Messrs. G. Higgins, C. Stewart, J. B. Lewis and J. Monash."

¹³ It is probable that the line between Fairfield Park and Riversdale was opened on the 24th March, 1891, and that the section linking Oakleigh and Riversdale was opened on the 30th May, 1890.

¹⁴ The Fairfield Park-Oakleigh line passed through Camberwell. A railway line linked Camberwell and Melbourne. See *Bradshaw's Guide to Victoria* for January 1892, p. 71 and p. 75.

¹⁵ Quoted from *The Age*, Saturday, 1st March, 1890, p. 14.

¹⁶ See *Report of the Melbourne Harbour Trust Commissioners for the Year 1893*, p. 57.

¹⁷ See *Report of the Melbourne Harbour Trust Commissioners for the Year 1893*, p. 13 and p. 57.

¹⁸ See *Report of the Melbourne Harbour Trust Commissioners for the Year 1895*, p. 28.

¹⁹ See *Victorian Municipal Director for 1893*, p. 124.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ See *The Argus*, Monday, 30th January, 1893, p. 6.

²² The *Report of the Melbourne Harbour Trust Commissioners for the Year 1894* does not give the names of members of the Trust's staff who were retrenched in that year.

²³ Monash married Miss Victoria Moss in Melbourne on Wednesday, 8th April, 1891. See *Table Talk*, Melbourne, Friday, 10th April, 1891, pp. 9-10. Lady Monash died on Friday, 27th February, 1920, in Melbourne.

²⁴ Mr. Joshua Thomas Noble Anderson, B.A., B.E., M.Inst.C.E., A.M.Inst.E. (Aust.). Born 14th February, 1865, at Dunmurry, County Antrim, Ireland. President of Victorian Institute of Engineers, 1901-02. Died 18th October, 1949, in Melbourne.

²⁵ See Sands & McDougall's *Melbourne and Suburban Directory for 1895*, p. 944.

²⁶ The partnership was apparently dissolved about 1907. See Sands & McDougall's *Melbourne, Suburban and Country Directory for 1907*, p. 1402.

²⁷ See *Proceedings of the Victorian Institute of Engineers*, Vol VI (1905), p. 29.

²⁸ Monash was admitted to the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and of Bachelor of Laws at the University of Melbourne on 16th March, 1895. Although he had completed the Arts course in 1887, he apparently postponed having the degree conferred until 1895.

²⁹ See *S.E.C. Magazine*, Melbourne, Vol. 11, No. 28, p. 5.

³⁰ See *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Thursday, 2nd June, 1898, p. 6.

³¹ See *Samuel McCaughey: A Biography*, by Patricia McCaughey (Sydney, 1955), p. 95.

³² See *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Friday, 18th March, 1898, p. 3.

³³ See *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Thursday, 2nd June, 1898, pp. 4 and 6.

³⁴ Quoted from *The Victorian Law Reports, 1903-1904*, Vol. XXIX, p. 308.

³⁵ See *The Varsity Engineer*, Melbourne, No. 8, December, 1913, p. 7.

³⁶ See *The Argus*, Saturday, 25th February, 1899, p. 9, for a report of the ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the bridge.

³⁷ See *S.E.C. Magazine*, Melbourne, Vol. 11, No. 28, p. 5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁹ Notice of the change of name of this Company to that of "The Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company Proprietary Limited" was recorded in the Office of the Registrar-General of Victoria on 15th November, 1905

⁴⁰ Later this address was changed to Collins House, 360-366 Collins Street, Melbourne.

⁴¹ Mr. David Mitchell, Born 16th February, 1829, at Forfarshire, Scotland. Died 25th March, 1916, in Melbourne, Victoria.

⁴² It was recorded in the Office of the Registrar-General of Victoria on 8th November, 1921, that Sir John Monash had retired from the Board of Directors of "The Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company Proprietary Limited."

⁴³ Quoted from the original Memorandum of Association of The Monier Pipe Company (Proprietary) Limited, dated 20th September, 1901.

⁴⁴ See Monash's lecture, "Notes on Tests of Reinforced Concrete Beams," delivered in Melbourne on 3rd May, 1905, and published in *Proceedings of the Victorian Institute of Engineers*, Vol. VI, pp. 29-42 and pp. 79-92.

⁴⁵ See *The Argus*, Tuesday, 22nd March, 1910, p. 7, and Thursday, 24th March, 1910, p. 6.

⁴⁶ See *The Argus*, Thursday, 3rd November, 1910, p. 7.

⁴⁷ See *Proceedings of the Victorian Institute of Engineers*, Vol. XII, pp. 28-49.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁴⁹ See *The Melbourne University Calendar, 1913*, p. 637, which said Monash was appointed Examiner in Civil Engineering, Part II.

⁵⁰ Quoted from *The Varsity Engineer*, Melbourne, October 1912, p. 41.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

⁵² Quoted from *Proceedings of the Victorian Institute of Engineers*, Vol. XIII, p. 5.

⁵³ See *Proceedings of the Victorian Institute of Engineers*, Vol. XIV.

⁵⁴ See *The Commonwealth Engineer*, Vol. I, No. 10, 1st May, 1914, pp. 336-339.

⁵⁵ Professor Henry Payne, M.Inst.C.E., M.Inst.M.E. Born 3rd March, 1871, at Calcutta. Professor of Engineering in the University of Melbourne from March, 1910, to 29th February, 1932. Died 28th March, 1945, in Melbourne.

⁵⁶ General Monash was succeeded on this occasion in the office of President by Mr. H. R. Harper.

⁵⁷ Quoted from *Proceedings of the Victorian Institute of Engineers*, Vol. XVI, p. 3.

⁵⁸ Quoted from *War Letters of General Monash*. Edited by F. M. Cutlack, p. 284.

⁵⁹ Quoted from *The Argus*, Saturday, 15th November, 1919, p. 21.

⁶⁰ Monash was promoted to the rank of General on 11th November, 1929.

⁶¹ See *The Argus*, Friday, 28th June, 1918, p. 5, for a report of this Policy Speech.

⁶² See *Victoria Government Gazette*, No. 187, dated 6th October, 1920, p. 3076.

⁶³ See *Three Decades: The Story of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria from its Inception to December, 1948*, p. 32.

⁶⁴ The title of this Act was "State Electricity Commission Act 1920."

⁶⁵ Quoted from *Three Decades*, p. 32.

⁶⁶ Later the "Melbourne Electric Supply Company Act 1924."

⁶⁷ See *The Argus*, Wednesday, 10th December, 1924, p. 21, for a report of this meeting. See also "State Electricity Commission. Statement by Sir John Monash, Chairman, on the Melbourne Electric Supply Company Bill delivered in the Legislative Council Committee Room on Tuesday, 9th December, 1924." (Official.)

⁶⁸ Quoted from *Three Decades*, p. 62.

⁶⁹ See *The Argus*, Tuesday, 23rd March, 1920, p. 6.

⁷⁰ See *The University of Melbourne Calendar, 1957*, p. 22.

⁷¹ See *Report of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science* for the text of this Address.

⁷² For the text of this report see Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers for 1923-24, Volume 4, pp. 229-232.

⁷³ For the text of this report see Papers presented to the Parliament of Victoria, Session 1925. Legislative Assembly, Vol. 2.

⁷⁴ See *The Journal of the Institution of Engineers, Australia*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (January, 1930), p. 41, and Vol. 3, No. 10 (October, 1931), p. 363.

⁷⁵ Quoted from *State Electricity Commission of Victoria. Twelfth Annual Report for the Financial Year ended 30th June, 1931*, p. 5.

⁷⁶ See *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 83, dated 9th October, 1931, p. 1683.

⁷⁷ Quoted from *The Australian Jewish Herald*, Thursday, 15th October, 1931, p. 5.

EDITOR'S NOTE

An article on General Sir John Monash by Colonel A. W. Hyman appeared in the *Journal* of the Society, Vol. 2, p. 20, and other references to him are in Vol. 1, p. 99, and Vol. 3, p. 434. Photographs are in Vol. 2 at p. 26, and Vol. 1, p. 100.

Reference may also be made to a paper by Mr. Warren Perry, *The Military Life of Sir John Monash*, in the *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol. 38 (December, 1957), p. 25.