## **DIRCKS, Alexander Alfred**



Alexander Alfred Dirks was born 1858, in Balmain, son of Johann F. & Margaretha D. Dircks. His mother died in 1893 and his father in 1896.

He was educated at Cleveland-street School, and joined the Postal Department as a cadet in 1872 and rose rapidly to the position of Assistant Electrical Engineer.1

On 28th April 1884 Alexander Dircks of Marrickville married Mary, eldest daughter of J. Vicars, of Ashfield.2

In 1893, as a member of the militia, he was promoted in the New South Wales military forces to be second lieutenant (Engineers).3

By 1896, again in the militia, he was promoted to Lieutenant of the No. 4 Company, N.S.W. Engineers.4

In 1906, as a prominent officer (assistant electrical engineer) of the Sydney Post Office, he was one of three selected to bring the Western Australia Post and Telegraph Department up to date, acting as a special commissioner of inquiry. He is described as an efficient and experienced officer, and on his departure was presented with a gold watch. When its reorganisation was decided upon, he was appointed Chief Engineer for Western Australia.5

In October 1910 a newspaper interview took place with A. A Dircks, electrical engineer in the Postmaster-General's Department for the State of Western Australia, who was then stationed in Carnarvon, W.A.6

In 1911 he was appointed Chief Electrical Engineer for Victoria, and there supervised the introduction of the automatic exchange at Geelong, the first of its kind in the Commonwealth. He was then living in Elsternwick, Victoria, where his eldest daughter, Annie Margaretha Dircks, was married.7

In March 1916 [during WWI) there was a ‘reign of terror’ regarding the nationality of employees of the Victorian Post Office.

‘We [the newspaper] suggested that it might be as well for the Postmaster General to inquire why a man named Dircks should be employed as electrical engineer in the Post Office at a time like the present. We pointed out that Dircks had visited Germany just prior to the outbreak of war while on furlough, and stated that Dircks was alleged to be connected with a pottery company which has its works near Ringwood, and which recently had secured an order for a supply of insulators. It is now stated that Dircks is an Australian, his father being a Dane. It is further explained, by the Post Office authorities that Dircks undertook his trip to Germany while on six months' furlough under instructions from the Commonwealth Government in order to inquire into telephone systems. Dircks himself denies that he is connected with the pottery company mentioned or that he ever had any interest in it, and states that he was only three days in Germany, having left there in consequence of the outbreak of war and arrived in London on August 4.’

In that year he succeeded the late Mr. Nelson as Chief Electrical Engineer of the Postal Department for New South Wales, which position he held till his retirement in 1918.8

By March 1917 he had settled in Beecroft and the following year was elected as secretary of the Beecroft Bowling Club.9

In 1921 Alexander Alfred Dircks was secretary of the Beecroft-Cheltenham Soldiers’ Memorial Committee.10

Mr. A. A. Dircks, of Beecroft, died on 1st September 1929, aged 71 years.

His many achievements and interests are spread over a number of obituaries; e.g. ‘Mr. Dircks took a keen interest in the development of electrical science. He was one of the earliest experimenters for the G.P.O. in wireless communication, and took great pains in coaching junior members of the staff in the theory of their work. For some time he was a member of the Ashfield Horticultural Society. He sang in the Sydney Liedertafel for many years, and at various times he was an active member of the golf clubs at Dobroyde and Fremantle. He was an office-bearer of the Presbyterian churches at Ashfield, Cottesloe (W.A.), Gardenvale (Vic), and Beecroft. On his retirement he became a member of the Beecroft Bowling Club, of which he was for years the secretary, and, later, president. He was secretary also of the Beecroft branch of the King and Empire Alliance, and a member of the School of Arts Committee.’11

‘Mr. Dircks leaves a widow, two sons, Messrs. H. D. [Hugh Douglas] Dircks, manager of Vicar's Woollen Mills, Marrickville (N.S.W.), and L. K. Dircks, of Dunedoo (N.S.W.), and two daughters, one of whom is the wife of the Rev. R. Wilson Macaulay, of the Manse, Camberwell. The other daughter is unmarried.’12

His wife Mary died on 28th July 1939 at Beecroft.13

**Bibliography**

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8 Graphic of Australia (Melbourne, Vic.: 1916 - 1918), Friday 3 March 1916, page 2; Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Thursday 5 September 1929, page 15

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11 Argus (Melbourne, Vic: 1848 - 1957), Saturday 7 September 1929, page 20

12 Argus (Melbourne, Vic: 1848 - 1957), Saturday 7 September 1929, page 20

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