

## **Major General Sir Charles Rosenthal KCB CMG DSO VD (7 MIDs)**

**Foreign Awards: The Belgian Croix de Guerre, the French Croix de Guerre and Officer of the Legion of Honour of France.**

Commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division 1918 · **1919, 1921** · 1926, 1932- 1937

Charles Rosenthal is best known for his highly decorated service as a soldier in World War I, but he was also an architect, a choirmaster, and an organist. He was an amazing man, with very broad interests, great enthusiasm and a very positive outlook. He was certainly a forward thinker. Today there are streets named after him in Sydney, and Canberra. Charles Rosenthal and his sister were the only children of Carl Johann Christian Rosenthal, a Dane and a teacher at the Belanglo State School, New South Wales, and his wife Emily Fredericka Rosenthal, née Cloy, a Swede. Charles was born in February 1875 in the New South Wales country town of Berrima.

At the age of almost 15, Charles Rosenthal moved to Geelong in Victoria, where he became articled to an architect, and two years later he joined the Geelong Battery of the Militia Garrison Artillery of Victoria with the rank of gunner. The architectural examinations were voluntary, but Rosenthal thought that qualifications were essential. He passed the numerous examinations and became an associate of the RVIA. He moved to Western Australia and worked in the Public Service, as an architect, for three years. While working in Coolgardie, Rosenthal was a conductor of the choir and organist at the local Wesley Church. At the age of 22 he married Ellen Harriet Burston from Melbourne, they had three sons, two of whom later served in the navy and one in the army. When he left Coolgardie at the age of 23 he was presented with a purse of sovereigns for his civic duty and his enthusiasm. His wife returned to Melbourne by ship from Perth, while Rosenthal rode a bicycle from Coolgardie to Melbourne, an amazing trip in those days. Prior to Federation, Rosenthal moved to Sydney, and he continued his professional studies. He advocated for the formation of a federal body for all the State Institutes of Architects, as well as a university course leading to qualification as an architect.

After returning from Western Australia, Rosenthal re-joined the Militia. He combined his love of music with an interest in ecclesiastical architecture. He said in 1910 "Aeroplanes will add a new dimension to land warfare. We should be learning to use them for that purpose". When war was declared in 1914, he held the rank of major in the army.

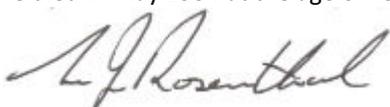
### **MILITARY · WWI**

In September 1914, Rosenthal embarked in Brisbane and sailed for Egypt with his 3<sup>rd</sup> Artillery Brigade. After intensive training in Cairo he sailed for the Gallipoli peninsula, where he landed on 25 April 1915 with, as he stated, "a lack of sufficient artillery support". He spent six months at Gallipoli, being wounded twice, and finally being evacuated to England. Next he went to the Western Front and then Egypt early in 1916. Throughout the war, Rosenthal was wounded five times, gassed once and mentioned in dispatches seven times. His tunic, with 35 shrapnel holes in it, now lies in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. In May 1918, Rosenthal was appointed as commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Division, with the rank of Major General and 20,000 men under his command. In this position he retained his reputation as a "front line soldier". In August 1918 the battle of Mont St Quentin began. Its capture by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Division resulted in the German withdrawal back to the Hindenburg Line, and earned Rosenthal high praise from General Monash.

In 1917 Rosenthal was awarded the Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George; in 1918 the Belgian Croix de Guerre and in 1919 he was awarded the French Croix de Guerre, the Distinguished Service Order and he was promoted to a Knight Commander of the Bath. In the same year he became an Officer of the Legion of Honour of France. In 1922 he was awarded the Volunteer Decoration.

After WWI, Rosenthal returned to Australia and commanded the newly formed peacetime 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Division on two occasions. He also became an alderman of the City of Sydney Council, a member of the lower and upper houses of the New South Wales Government, although he did not finally retire from the army until his 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday in 1937. He was also President of the Institute of Architects of New South Wales for three years and a foundation fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. In 1944 he was made a Life Fellow.

From 1937 to 1945 Rosenthal was Administrator of the Territory of Norfolk Island. He became very involved in public works, education and health on the island, and during this period he ensured that the island gained an airstrip, and also issued postage stamps for the first time. After 1945 he lived privately on Norfolk Island for over two years, before he returned to Sydney, where he died in May 1954 at the age of 79 years.



**Margaret Rosenthal AM, MSc Agr, PhD, Dip Ed, MEd Admin Granddaughter 18 March 2010.**