



## Moruya's Marvellous Medico

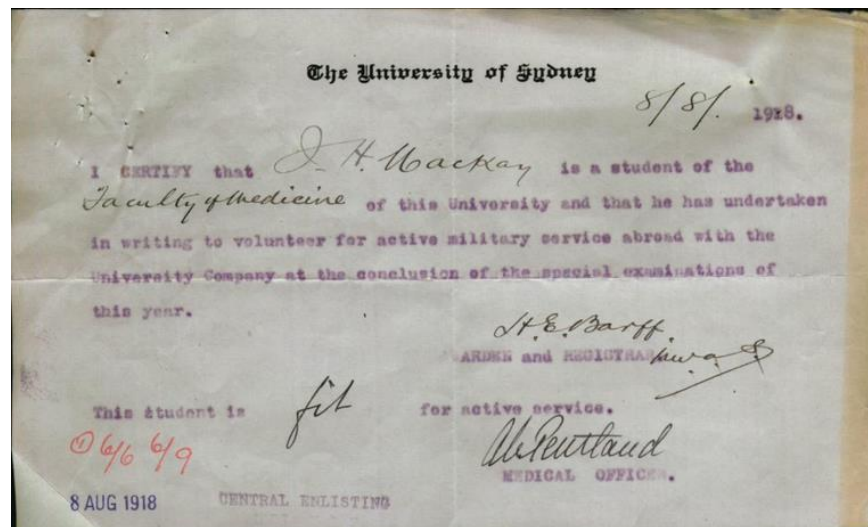
### By Shirley Jurmann

Irwin Hugh Mackay was born in Kempsey in 1894, the son of Hugh Adam Mackay and Mercie Caroline Wright. He was one of ten children.

In 1918 Irwin enlisted for military service but the war ended before he was sent abroad. His enlisting papers however do tell us a little about him. When he enlisted he was 24, 5'9" tall and weighed 154lbs (69kg). He had a fair complexion with blue eyes and brown hair. His nominated religion was Presbyterian. He had already spent 2 years in the Sydney University Company.

After graduating from Sydney University, he went to England to further his studies. On his return he had a breakdown in health and did not work as a GP for six years.

He married Ivy Margaret Glover in Sydney in 1927. Two sons were born, Geoffrey and John. Dr Mackay obtained a position as ship's surgeon and travelled on ships between Australia and Japan. After he left the sea he worked at Newcastle Hospital for eight years where he rose to the position of Assistant Superintendent. During this time, his two sons died, Geoffrey in 1933 and John in 1935. In 1936 he left Newcastle and came to Moruya. Here two more children were born, Ken and Jan.



His medical practice covered the area from Narooma to Batemans Bay. At this time the equipment at Moruya Hospital was very antiquated and Dr Mackay had to personally purchase any equipment which was necessary for him to perform the major operations for which he became so well known. He was a most likeable and understanding family physician and outstanding surgeon. He removed infected tonsils, stitched up gashes, cured illnesses and diseases, delivered babies. At least one grateful mother named her baby Irwin in his honour.

He had a wry sense of humour. On one occasion he came home from delivering a baby and remarked to the young girl working in the house that Mrs So and So had had a son. The girl said she didn't realise Mr and Mrs So and So had been married that long. He replied that first babies frequently only took five to seven months – all the others took nine months! Broken bones were his speciality. Scores of people walking around with straight limbs were very grateful for his skills. Broken necks, backs and any other fractures and dislocations were mended by him. On several occasions he repaired multiple skull fractures. One time a patient with a pulped skull had to have mud removed from the brain before anything else could be done. Another patient who recovered to lead a normal life had nine fractures of the skull. No job was too big for Dr Irwin Mackay. Patients were never shipped off to Sydney unless it was absolutely necessary, although he was quick to recognise when such treatment was needed. If such a measure became necessary Dr or Mrs Mackay would personally drive them to Sydney. It was this fact which brought home to Dr Mackay the need for an ambulance based in Moruya. It was due to the hard work of Dr and Mrs Mackay that such a necessary service was established. Dr Mackay donated the first £50 to the fund and personally collected another £800 to put the first ambulance in the town in operation. He was then Chairman of the Ambulance Finance Committee and worked for the ambulance service for a long period. During his 24 years of practice he did more for the district and its inhabitants than any other citizen residing here at the time.

When he died in January 1968 his death was deplored by people up and down the Coast. He was survived by his wife Margaret, and two children, Ken and Jan.



Today Dr Mackay is commemorated with the Community Centre in Page Street Moruya, which opened in 1990 and was named in his honour.

Photo from

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