

Ipswich Riflemen of the Great War 1914-1918

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On the eve of ANZAC Centenary commemoration's the members of Ipswich and District Rifle Club pause to reflect upon an important and largely untold story of the *Ipswich Riflemen of the Great War 1914-1918*.

In the context of the Australian Rifle Club Movement, the title of *Riflemen* is a colloquial term which was used amongst rifle club members for the majority of the 20th Century.

The late Lieutenant-Colonel A. T. Jackson V.D, Queensland Rifle Association (QRA) Historian and Supervisor of Rifle Clubs in Queensland and the Richmond-Tweed District of New South Wales, penned the following words in 1927.

“To tell the public generally that the Rifle Clubs of Queensland well and truly ‘did their bit’ in the Great War would only bring forth from some a smile of incredulity, and to a certain extent this is quite understandable, for when a member of a rifle club enlisted in the fighting force his identity as a rifleman was for the time being lost. He at once became a member of a certain Battalion in the great Australian Imperial Forces, and only his friends knew that for years he had been an active and enthusiastic member of some rifle club, and had given up most of his Saturday afternoons to acquire an expert knowledge of the rifle” (Jackson, 1927, 66).

According to Lieutenant-Colonel Jackson (1927, 69-70) the number of enrolled Rifle Club members from Queensland who enlisted in the Great War reached 4,382, with an additional 934 former Rifle Club members having also joined the A.I.F. and from the total of 5,316 Rifleman of Queensland to enlist in the Great War, 568 gave their lives.

For over fifty years prior to the outbreak of the Great War an organised shooting movement had existed in the City of Ipswich. The history of the Ipswich shooting movement is synonymous with the development of the QRA which was officially constituted in 1861 (Casey, 2011). The volunteer rifle movement of the 19th Century is credited as the forerunner of the QRA and this movement began with the formation of the Ipswich Rifle Club in 1859 (The North Australian, 1859).

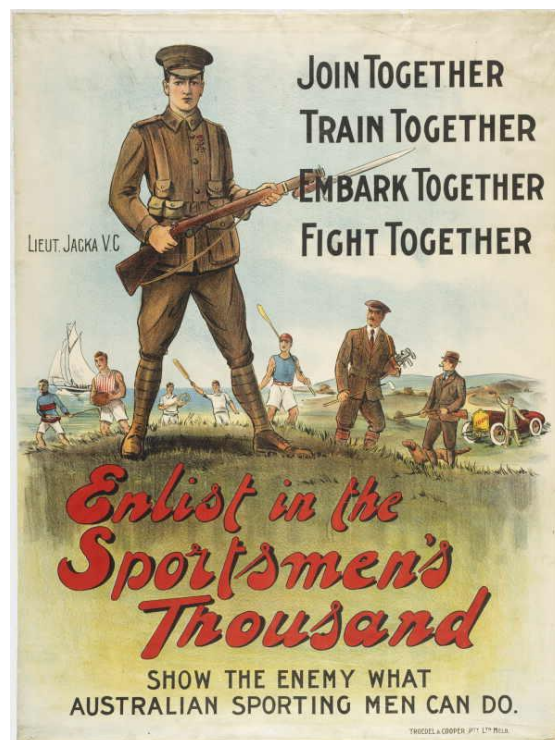
The Rifle Club movement gathered its momentum when, under the *Defence Act 1903*, the Commonwealth steadfastly developed Rifle Ranges throughout Australia to assist in creating a ‘civilian based’ reserve defence force. Civilians joined the ranks and pledged an Oath to the Commonwealth becoming the Riflemen of what was a heavily subsidised movement (Refer Appendix 1, Historical enrolment form).

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By the year 1906 there were approximately eleven rifle clubs in operation throughout Ipswich and its surrounding regions. These were Goodna, Dinmore, Forest Hill, Laidley, Rosewood, Gatton, Marburg, Lowood, Boonah, Ipswich City and Ipswich Railway Rifle Club. On the 14th of November 1906, these clubs formed the Ipswich and West Morton Rifle Clubs Union, which initially had 336 members.

In contrast to popular thought, records have shown that rifle club membership across Australia experienced substantial growth during the years of World War One. According to Kilsby (2013, 87) by mid-1916 rifle club membership Australia wide had reached the staggering heights of 101,000. A theme that was consistent within Queensland. According to Casey, (2011, 52) QRA's membership had "skyrocketed" throughout the Great War commencing at 9,578 in 1914 and peaking at 18,181 enrolled members by 1917. It is estimated that about 28,000 Australian rifle club members enlisted in the Great War (Kilsby 2013, 87).

According to Kilsby (2013, 87) two major recruiting drives, of moderate success, were associated with rifle clubs. The first being the uprising of recruiting marches throughout NSW and Queensland country towns and the second initiative was as a major recruiting drive of 1916 calling on men to 'Enlist in the Sportsmen's Thousand, to show the enemy what Australian Sporting men can do'. One Rifleman to have answered county's call, from the very onset of the Great War, was Private William Eddie (Billy) Sing of Proserpine Rifle Club. For his skill with the rifle, Billy Sing was elevated to a national identity with reports of his Gallipoli success appearing in London and American newspapers (Tate, 1993). By April of 1916, Queensland Times news reports had cited publications which labelled Billy Sing as Australia's champion rifle shot for his efforts at Gallipoli (Queensland Times, 1916).



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Whilst it is considered that a large contingent of the members of Ipswich based Rifle Club's enlisted in the Great War, on research to date it has proven difficult to quantify the exact number of enlistees from the Ipswich and West Morton Rifle Clubs Union. Despite the limitation on researching the subject, a suitable comparison may very well be made upon review of the Metropolitan District Rifle Club Union whose records, according to Jackson, (1927, 70) account for 802 members of Brisbane based Rifle Clubs as having volunteered to fight in the Great War.

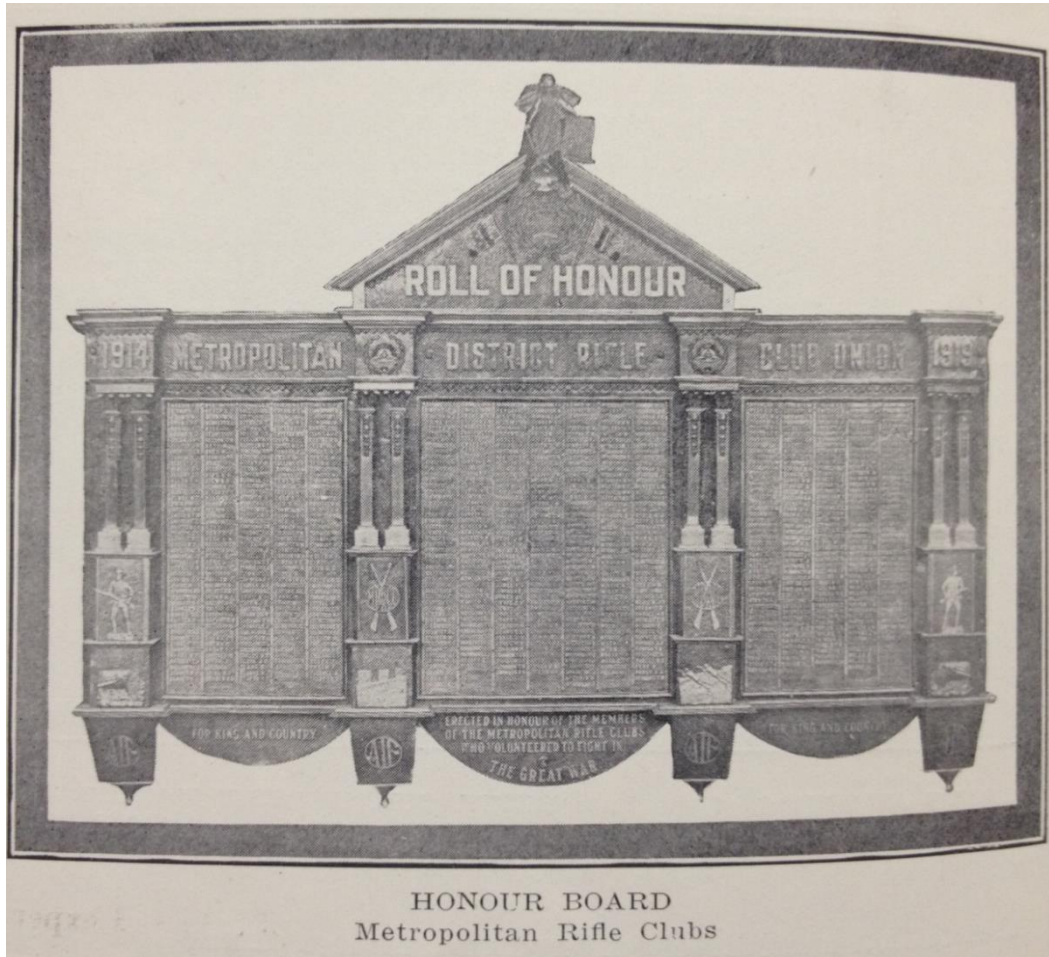


Photo: Metropolitan District Rifle Club Honour Board previously on display at Head-Quarters of the Southern Queensland Rifle Association, Adelaide Street, Brisbane (Current whereabouts unknown).

By the commencement of the 1917 club season, Queensland Times news reports of the day state that Seventeen (17) members of the Ipswich Railway Rifle Club had answered the country's call as of year to date (Railway Rifle Club, 1917). The following account serves purpose as a graphic insight and lasting reminder of just three (3) of the Ipswich Riflemen who enlisted in the Great War. The purpose of which follows the words of Lieutenant-Colonel Jackson (1927, 66) *"It is desired to instil into the minds of present members, and those who may later become members, the glorious record of the Australian Rifle Clubs, which it is there honour and duty to uphold"*.

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LINDSAY, James Archibald, Sapper,

Service No. 34, 3rd Field Company, Australian Engineers, Killed in Action Gallipoli, Turkey 10th May 1915.

Born in Ipswich 14/05/1887.

Son of John and Mary Ann Lindsay.

Employed at Ipswich Railway Workshops for 6 years and The North Australian Hotel where his brother John Lindsay Jnr was the Publican 1910-1920's. His brother John, a trophy sponsor of Ipswich Railway Rifle Club, had previously been the publican for Caledonian Hotel Bell Street (Queensland Times, 1911) and then later became Publican for the Racecourse Hotel 1930's (Picture Ipswich, 2015). James was a keen footballer, representing QLD against the NZ Team in 1913 and other English Teams (Habben, 2009a, 604).

Enlisted at Enoggera 22 August 1914.

Embarked upon HMAT Geelong AC

Place of death: Gallipoli, Turkey

Cause & Date of death: Killed in action 10/05/1915 (15th day of the Gallipoli Campaign) at the age of 27.

Cemetery or memorial details: Courtney's and Steel's Post Cemetery Special Memorial 30, Gallipoli Peninsula, Turkey. Epitaph: "Their Glory Shall Not Be Blotted Out"

Honour Stone/Memorial: Memorial Hall Roll of Honour, Railway Workshops Memorial, St. Stephen's Church, Ipswich Honour Board, Ipswich Boys' Grammar School Honour Board, and Masonic Lodge 898 Honour Board

Medal Entitlement: 1914/1915 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal

Service Roll No.63 of Ipswich Railway Rifle Club records Regimental Number 2441 James Archibald Lindsay as having joined the club on the 25th of March 1907, Age 19, Height 5'10, of no former service. As a qualified Iron fitter at the Railway workshops James travelled to America in 1911 to further his trade skills. According to news reports, On the Saturday Afternoon of 11 March 1911 just prior to his Trip to America, J. J Meekin, Captain of the Ipswich Railway Rifle Club presented James Lindsay with a 'neat writing case' to record his learnings. J. J Meekin, a distinguished Rifleman of the era and who was later elected as a life member of Ipswich Railway Rifle Club, spoke in most eulogistic terms of Mr Lindsay's capabilities as a Rifleman (Queensland Times, 1911).

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E. R. LINDSAY

LINDSAY, Edgar Ronald, Private,

Regimental No. 6106, 17th Reinforcements, 26th Infantry Battalion, Killed in Action in Villers-Bretonneux, France, 5th July 1918.

Born in Booval Ipswich 08/08/1890

Son of Robert and Sarah Lindsay.

Employed as: Clerk.

Enlisted at Brisbane 18th September 1916,

Embarked upon HMAT "Marathon" Port of Brisbane 27/10/16

Place of Death: Villers-Bretonneux, France

Cause & Date of death: Killed in action 05/07/1918 at the age of 27.

According to Wildman (1919, 112) Private Edgar Lindsay had advanced through the battlefields of Bullecourt, Ypres, Polygon Wood and that he had sustained a wound to the thigh at Passchendaele Ridge on the 4th of October 1917 which saw him hospitalised in England. Edgar returned to the front lines 27th February 1918 to advance through Dernacourt, Buire, and Morlancourt before he was killed in action at Villers-Bretonneux 05/07/18.

Cemetery or memorial details: Memorial Hall Roll of Honour, Eastern Suburbs Honour Stone, St. Stephen's Church, Ipswich Honour Board and Ipswich Boy's Grammar School Honour Board (the secondary school where Edgar had been educated).

Medal Entitlement: British War Medal and Victory Medal.

Service Roll No.63 of Ipswich Railway Rifle Club records Regimental Number 24775 Edgar Ronald Lindsay as having joined the club on the 18th of May 1916, Age 25, Height 6'2, of no former service. Having only joined the Rifle Club four months prior to his enlistment it would seem apparent that Edgar, like many other young men, had sought to learn the expert skills of the rifle.

For his parents Robert and Sarah Lindsay of Herbert Street Booval, the Great War had taken the lives of two of their sons, Edgar's Brother Alexander James Lindsay having died at the battle of Mein Road, Belgium 20/09/17, age 25. The Lindsay's were one of five sets of Ipswich brothers to be killed in the Great War (Habben, 2009b, 24).

Authors Note: At the time of research it is unknown if Edgar's brother, Alexander Lindsay, was a member of the Ipswich Railway Rifle Club. Furthermore, it is unknown if Brothers Alexander and Edgar Lindsay were related to Riflemen James Archibald Lindsay.

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HINGST, August William, Private,

Regimental No. 679, 12th Reinforcements, 12rd Machine Gun Company, Killed in Action France 12th August 1918.

Born in Laidley 29/03/1895

Son of Karl August Hingst and Augusta Wilhelmina Hingst (German settlers).

Employed as a Labourer

Enlisted at Ipswich 19th February 1917

Embarked upon HMAT "Suevic" Port of Melbourne 21 June 1917

Place of Death: France, no known grave.

Cause & Date of death: Killed in action 12/08/18 at the age of 23

Cemetery or memorial details: Australian National Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, France. Memorial Hall Roll of Honour and Western Suburbs Honour Stone.

Medal Entitlement: British War Medal and Victory Medal


Roll of Honour Circulars incorrectly suggest that August was a member of the Redbank Rifle Club. It is believed that August was a member of Ipswich City Rifle Club who shot alongside Ipswich Railway Rifle Club on the Redbank Rifle Range.

Authors Note: At time of research the membership records of the former Ipswich City Rifle Club are largely unknown. Further research on the history of former Ipswich City Rifle Club, including its Riflemen of the Great War, is well warranted.

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Appendix 1: Historical Australian Rifle Club Enrolment Form, with Oath

AUSTRALIAN  RIFLE CLUBS

Member's No.....

ENROLMENT FORM

(Not to be used for Honorary Members)

Club..... IPSWICH RAILWAY & DISTRICT RIFLE CLUB..... Club No. 63.....

Name in full.....
Surname (Block Letters) Christian Names

Postal Address.....

Date of Birth..... Place of Birth.....

Occupation.....

Are you a British subject—natural born?.....or naturalised?.....

Are you a member of any other Rifle Club?.....
(If "Yes," include name of Club)

Have you ever been a member?.....
(If "Yes," include name of Club and last year of membership)

Are you a member of the Navy, Army, or Air Force?..... If so give particulars:.....
(Serving members will not complete the Oath or Affirmation)

Have you ever been a member?..... If so, give particulars.....

Date..... Signature.....

† OATH OF ALLEGIANCE or AFFIRMATION

(As prescribed by Australian Rifle Club Regulation 19)

Oath

I,.....
 swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lady the Queen, as a Member of the Australian Rifle Clubs, and that I will resist Her Majesty's enemies and cause Her Majesty's peace to be kept and maintained, and that I will in all matters appertaining to my service as a Member of the Australian Rifle Clubs faithfully discharge my duty according to Law. So help me God.

Affirmation

I,.....
 solemnly and sincerely affirm and declare that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lady the Queen as a Member of the Australian Rifle Clubs, and that I will resist Her Majesty's enemies and cause Her Majesty's peace to be kept and maintained, and that I will in all matters appertaining to my service as a Member of the Australian Rifle Clubs faithfully discharge my duty according to law.

Before me* at..... Ipswich.....
 in the State of..... Queensland.....

(Signature of person administering the Oath or Affirmation) }
 (Signature of person subscribing to the Oath or Affirmation)

Date.....

CAPTAIN'S CERTIFICATE

I certify that the above-named member appears to be of the age indicated by the date of birth and that his eye-sight has been tested by me, by the aid of the "Army Test Types," and appears to be good.

He was elected a member of the above Rifle Club on..... 29-10-59.....

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