

# The Meekin Story

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The surname Meekin has long been known to me for my late grandfather Jim had often spoken with sorrow for his deceased club mate Allen John Meekin. On occasion I would hear about a young and promising marksman who had taken up rifle shooting in the years prior to WWII. Media reports of the era describe Allen as an extraordinarily fine young marksman of great promise, a mere boy who had scored a century in his first year of rifle shooting (*QLD Times Mon 07/02/38*).

As club activities fell into a mandatory recess for WWII, and the Redbank Rifle Range having transformed into a bustling military camp, a number of members sought to enlist in the Second Australian Imperial Force. Members Allen Meekin aged 18 and Jim Rush aged 19 signed up at the same time, Allen to the army and Jim to the air force. As a coal miner, Jim's manager would not release him and so reluctantly Jim stayed home underground and his best friend Allen was killed in action in New Guinea, 1943.

This, along with the story of the A.J. Meekin Memorial Cup (picture follows), which was contested by members of the Ipswich Railway & District Rifle Club, was all I knew of the story. The story of Allen's father, Jack Meekin, or as more often noted J.J. Meekin, and his lifetime contribution to the sport is a recent discovery and worth sharing.



*J.J Meekin with his Rifle Club Trophies & badges 1918*

*Photo courtesy of Picture Ipswich*

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The following extract is from the *Queensland Times*, Saturday 5 July 1947 p.9 by sports biographer J.E.E, under the title "55 Years With Rifle";

After 55 years of rifle shooting, Jack Meekin, or as he is perhaps better known, J. J. Meekin, has retired from active club membership. When the clubs had their first post-war meeting at Redbank recently, J.J. was asked to fire the opening shot. There have been very few legitimate bull's-eyes scored with these opening rounds but, knowing J.J.'s ability with the short magazine Lee Enfield, it's safe to say that that opening shot went fair through the middle.

J. J. Meekin's first appearance as a rifleman was with the Indooroopilly State School Cadets when he fired off the musketry course. However, he hit the target only twice, scoring two outers, for a total of four points, from a possible 240. That was in the days of the Snider rifle the "kick" from which was something to remember. Being afraid of the "kick," J.J. held the rifle in such a fashion that when it was fired the butt slipped down under the armpit and the muzzle pointed into the air. The Martini Henry rifle followed the Snider, and the kick from the new weapon unless it was held correctly, was almost as hard as that from the old one.

When Colonel Lyster, the then Commandant, donated prizes for rifle shooting it was really J.J.'s start as a marksman because he had made up his mind to forget about the recoil. However, the Head Teacher of the school, Major Le Vaux, said that it was not much use J.J. competing because it would be waste of ammunition. J.J. begged for a chance, was given one, and came fourth in the competition. He followed that up by winning the Gold Cross Rifles for the best shot in the musketry course and won the cross again in each of the two succeeding years. His first cash prize was £3/3/- donated for competition among Indooroopilly cadets by the then Governor, Sir Henry Wylie Norman.

## First Medal

J.J.'s first medal was won in open competition with all Brisbane cadets in 1894 when, in a shoot off with a Brisbane Grammar School student named Green, he won 14-11.

In 1898 J.J. won the B-grade aggregate--the first introduced by the Q.R.A.-when he was the youngest member competing.

After leaving the Cadets J.J. joined the Moreton Regiment under Capt. McFarlane. Later he transferred to a company under the command of Captain Fryer, who won the Queen's Prize in 1886. After further success with the rifle in the Volunteers, J.J. joined the Railway Department in 1897 and the Railway and Works Rifle Club with W.J. Jamieson and Alex Mitchell. J.J. took his holidays for many years at the time of the Sydney prize meetings. J.J. says that he was not brilliant at those shoots, but he always won more than his expenses for the trip. He attended the first Commonwealth Prize fired at Randwick in 1901 when he tied with one of Queensland's best shots Warder A. Crease, of the St. Helena Rifle Club-with a score of 44. That was at a target on which the bull's eye had been reduced from 3ft. to 2ft. at the 700 yards range.

In 1905 when the great George Bradley won the Queen's Prize, J.J. tied with another of Queensland's notables, Warder Dick Hornsby, St. Helena Club, for 10th place in a shoot-off for the Queen's Badge. J.J. won. Later that year J.J. was one of the Queenslanders selected to go to Melbourne for the Federal teams' match.

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## Finished with Title

In 1919, at Toowoomba, he tied with A. Boasley and Tom Morphy, who was considered one of Queensland's best shots. In the shoot-off, which was for the championship after a tie at 146 out of 150, Boasley dropped out on the fourth shot and J.J. at the sixth.

In 1934 at the Ipswich and West Moreton Prize meeting at Redbank, J.J. won the 300yds., 500yds., and tied at the 600yds., where he was counted out. However he won the Francis Aggregate for the three matches, scoring 101 out of 105, and six points ahead of the next best

J.J. had been a member of the Ipswich Railway and District Rifle Club since 1900. He won the club championship more times than any other member, and finished up with the title.

He was a foundation member of the Brassall Miniature Rifle Club. In the Railway Club he was secretary for 10 years and had been captain since 1927.

## Other Sports

Rifle shooting, however, did not take all J.J.'s attention. After coming to Ipswich he played football with the Railway Rugby Union club as a forward, and was a member of the premiership winning team. The follow year he played with St. Paul's Young Men's Society team under the captaincy of G. Roots. That team won the premiership twice. He played with an Ipswich representative team in Brisbane during a country week carnival, and was then chosen in No. 2 Country team to play Metropolitan No. 2. He was a member of the Toowong, Indooroopilly, and Ipswich Harrier Clubs. His best trophy for athletics is a gold watch for winning a 440yds. race at the North Ipswich Reserve. J.J. has won trophies for swimming, cycling, and gymnastics, and was a member of the Wesley Club which won the Ipswich championship. He was in the well-known Geisha Troupe, which did a lot of good work for charity and the Show Society. To complete his all-round qualifications, J.J. played cricket with St. Thomas's Church of England Club, and was well-known as an amateur comedian.

He was a member of the Ipswich Military Unit picked to go to Melbourne for the celebrations in connection with the opening of the first Commonwealth Parliament. Whilst a member of the Moreton Regiment, he volunteered for service with the Third Australian Contingent in the Boer War, but, because he was an apprentice, was rejected. J.J. was permitted to go through a riding test, but the officer supervising, Colonel Deacon, failed him.

J.J.'s, advice to young riflemen is: Don't worry if you do not hit the bull's eye often at first.

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Brassall Miniature Rifle Club, Jack Meekin Foundation member (pictured seated middle centre, chap with no hat)



Ipswich Railway & District Rifle Club A. J. Meekin Memorial Cup

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Private A. J. Meekin

*Photo courtesy of National Archives of Australia*

## ***Ipswich Railway & District Rifle Club A.J. Meekin Memorial Cup***

### ***Won by***

<i>A. C. Kucks</i>	<i>1949</i>
<i>J. Woolf</i>	<i>1950</i>
<i>R. J. Rush (Jim)</i>	<i>1951</i>
<i>J. Woolf</i>	<i>1952</i>
<i>R. W. Rush (Joe)</i>	<i>1953</i>
<i>R. J. Rush</i>	<i>1954</i>
<i>J. Woolf</i>	<i>1955</i>
<i>J. Woolf</i>	<i>1956</i>
<i>R. G. Hallowell</i>	<i>1957</i>
<i>R. G. Hallowell</i>	<i>1958</i>
<i>A. Whiteley</i>	<i>1959</i>
<i>R. Christison</i>	<i>1960</i>
<i>E. Nunn</i>	<i>1961</i>
<i>R. Christison</i>	<i>1962</i>
<i>G. Rush (Greg)</i>	<i>1963</i>