Darebin’s Boer War

The South African Conflict: 1899 - 1902

Compiled for Darebin Heritage by Brian Membrey
Our cover illustration shows the First Victorian Regiment marching at the corner of Spring and Bourke Streets *en route* from Victoria Barracks to embark at Port Melbourne for Cape Town, Saturday, 28 October, 1899.

The Regiment was a mixture of Mounted Rifles and Infantry (unlike latter Contingents that were all mounted troops).

The number of volunteers far outnumbered the 250 places available for the Victorian force - remarkably, five Preston men were included amongst those that were selected.
CONTENTS

"FIVE FROM PRESTON IS PRETTY GOOD" ................................................................. 1
  The Three Musketeers ................................................................. 1
  Major William Braithwaite ......................................................... 2

ON RIFLE CLUBS AND RANGES ................................................................. 6
  The Use of the Umbrella in Modern Warfare ................................. 6
  The Volunteer Corps Act ............................................................... 6
  The Great Battle of Werribee ......................................................... 7
  The "Effective System" .................................................................. 8
  Our Local Army ............................................................................. 8
  The Northcote Division ................................................................. 9
  Theophilus J. Sumner .................................................................... 9
  The East Collingwood Rifles .......................................................... 10
  The Victorian Mounted Rifles ....................................................... 10

RESURRECTION OF THE RIFLE CLUBS .......................................................... 14
  The Conference ............................................................................. 15
  The Preston Rifle Club .................................................................. 15
  A New Rifle Range ....................................................................... 17
  Decline ......................................................................................... 17
  And Revival .................................................................................. 18
  A National Rifle Range ................................................................. 19
  Meanwhile in Northcote ............................................................... 20

THE LEADER'S "WAR CORRESPONDENTS" .............................................. 21
  Baptism of Fire ............................................................................ 23
  On Christmas Pudding ................................................................. 24
  Rensburg Drift ............................................................................. 25
  The Wounded ................................................................................ 27
  The Troops Return .................................................................... 27
  Wilmansrust ............................................................................... 28
  On Picquet ................................................................................... 30
  "Soldiers of the King": A Discordant Voice .................................. 30
  The Final Welcome Home ............................................................ 32
  The End ...................................................................................... 32
  A Final Blast ............................................................................... 33

THE HONOUR ROLLS ................................................................................. 34
  Unveiling of the Tablet ................................................................. 34
  Preston: A Full Roll Call ............................................................... 37
  Northcote: What The Leader Saw ............................................... 38
  Northcote: The Full Muster .......................................................... 40
  Heidelbergshire ........................................................................... 43

AND IN THE GREAT WAR ........................................................................ 43
  Those That Served ...................................................................... 43
    Preston ..................................................................................... 44
    Northcote .............................................................................. 45
    Heidelbergshire ...................................................................... 46
  Survivors of 1958 ....................................................................... 47
    Preston ..................................................................................... 47
    Northcote .............................................................................. 48
    Heidelbergshire ...................................................................... 48
    Alfred Hobart Sturdee ............................................................... 48

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS ................................................................. 49
  The Queen's South Africa Medal .................................................. 49
  The King's South Africa Medal .................................................... 50
"FIVE FROM PRESTON IS PRETTY GOOD"

The Three Musketeers

“Three Musketeers” in the persons of Messrs Chas. Patterson, Steve Prowse and Fred Michell - all Preston boys - called at this office in a high state of jubilation on Thursday, having been picked the day before to go with the Victorian contingent and fight for the liberties of their fellow Britshers in the Transvaal. Had it been another Queen’s Jubilee they couldn’t have been in better spirits over it. They have each promised to act as “special war correspondents to the Leader” while away, so our readers should be well supplied with first-hand information from the seat of war - if it ever gets that far. The above named gentlemen belong to the Mounted Rifles. Messrs F. Hull and G. Emery, infantrymen, also of Preston have also been chosen to go with the contingent. Five from Preston is pretty good”. 1

The numbers were minuscule compared to the Great War, but many Darebin men served in the Boer War of 1899 to 1902.

Preston’s population around the time that war broke out was put at 3,012 2, spread over fourteen square miles, confirming that the Leader’s comment that “five from Preston is pretty good” was, unusually for the Leader, an under-statement.

Although there were eventually 250 men selected for the contingent (125 infantry, 125 mounted), there were just 141 men (66 and 75 respectively) selected on the first day after the Mounted Rifles and First and Second Battalions of the infantry militia paraded for inspection on 11 October and were medically examined at Victoria Barracks. As the Leader suggested, five of the 141 from Preston was “pretty good”.

(Actually, although the unknown editor of the Leader wasn’t aware of it at the time, there were actually six volunteers from Preston - it was noted a few weeks later (November 16), that Private Harold Reed, a son of Mrs Harold Reed of Plenty Road, South Preston had volunteered and been accepting in the First Queensland Regiment - he was living in Zillmere in Brisbane at the time and later contributed a letter to the local paper).

(There was a general feeling that the rollout was disappointing - some 260 mounted men had volunteered in principle, but only 128 turned out on parade; on the infantry side, 54 of 90 from the 1st Battalion and 53 of 160 from the 2nd. Some 40 per cent of the Mounted Rifles were declared physically unfit - it was noted that the high percentage was probably due to the fact that they were not medically examined on enrolment in the Rifles in the same way as men how had joined the militia). 3

It was anticipated that men from militia units at Ballarat, Bendigo and Castlemaine would make up the numbers for the infantry; it was suggested that if no more Mounted Rifles presented over the next two days, the quota would be filled by members of the Rangers, a non-military force “many of whom are highly competent horsemen”.

The men selected entered camp the following Monday, the Mounted Rifles at the Flemington Showgrounds and the infantry at Victoria Barracks.

As it turned out, George Emery did not serve - he was the 22 year-old son of Frederick and Harriett Emery, the latter a long-time ladies draper in High Street. The reason for his withdrawal may have been the death the following week of his grandfather, Michael Emery who for many years prior to his retirement had run a pottery works in Wood Street.

Preston’s five were made up by the late inclusion of Andrew Hendrie.

The Leader’s comment “if it ever gets that far” was also relevant as war was only declared the day before the group’s enrolment and they would not have been aware of the fact when they volunteered.

1 The Leader, 14 October, 1899
2 Municipal Directory, 1899
3 The Argus, 12 October, 1899

This remarkable picture of the Victoria Barracks Parade Ground and the Infantry Regiment was taken on 28 October, 1899, just before they marched through Melbourne to embark.

It was taken by a well-known Northcote resident of the time, Dr Thomas George Beckett, doctor, pioneering radiologist and amateur photographer between 1891 and 1910. He was a Captain in the Mounted Rifles and a key figure in the formation of the Northcote Rifle Club in 1900 (page 20). Image courtesy Museum Victoria, MM8179
A Boer offensive into the British-held Natal and Cape Colony areas on 11 October (the Wednesday the men were accepted) saw a formal declaration of war after several months of negotiations had broken down.

Such a declaration had been expected and the Victorian government had already commenced plans for the First Contingent, the formal announcement of hostilities was not reported in Australia until the Thursday morning.

Although almost universally referred to in Australia as the Boer War, in British history, the South African campaign of 1899 to 1902 is technically the Second Boer War.

After Transvaal formally declared independence from the United Kingdom, a brief conflict began on 16 December 1880 with shots fired by Transvaal Boers at Potchefstroom and the ambush and destruction of a British Army convoy.

Although generally called a war, the actual engagements were of a relatively minor nature considering the few men involved on both sides and the short duration of the combat, lasting some ten weeks of sporadic action.

The Preston contingent was given a hastily-arranged send-off at the Shire Hall a couple of weeks later, the report confirming that Privates Hendrie and Hull had been selected for the Infantry, and Sergeant Patterson and Privates Michel and Prowse for the Mounted Rifles.

The Leader had little hesitation and much pride in emphasising Preston’s contribution:

"... its population did not entitle it to one place in the contingent, yet of such stuff is the military youth of the Shire composed that no less than five, or 2 per cent of the whole contingent have been deemed worthy to represent Victoria and fight side by side with the Imperial Army in the Transvaal".

The usual laudatory speeches were made; predictably it was Charles Patterson, the Scotch College educated nephew of a prominent estate agent in both Preston and Melbourne that made the major response; the other four confessing to no talent for speeches, but receiving in turn no less applause.

Another column of the same edition revealed that Patterson was president of the local branch of the Australian Natives Association and that "when responding to toasts in England at the time of the Jubilee he had declared that if the need came Australia would be foremost in volunteering assistance".

**Major William Braithwaite**

The send-off celebrations were appropriately enough chaired by Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) William Braithwaite of the Volunteer Forces.

Braithwaite was born in Northallerton (the name of his later home in High Street), Yorkshire in 1853 and came to Australia on the Royal Family with his parents in 1863. His father established a tannery in Murray Road in 1867 and William junior was trained in all aspects of the leather trade. His father was killed in an accident at the tannery in 1874 and William junior took charge of the business, gradually building it to become the largest employer in Preston.

He first entered the local council in 1885 and around the same time joined the new Victorian Mounted Rifles volunteer group. Finding the demands of the two organizations plus the responsibility of the day to day operation of the tannery somewhat extreme, he did not seek re-election after his term as a councillor.

Braithwaite was appointed Captain in the Rifles in 1887 and to Major in 1894, commanding the first battalion of the Victorian Mounted Rifles.

Braithwaite sought to create a unit of the Voluntary Infantry Corps in Preston in 1886, but after being told by the military command that they had no intention of allowing an infantry corps, he tried instead for a Volunteer Military Corps, again to be rebuked and told instead to settle for the more modest aim of a Rifle Club. He was again prominent in the re-formation of the club in 1900 after a period of inactivity.

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4 literally “farmer” in Afrikaans
5 “Michel” was the correct spelling although the Leader on several occasions added an extra “l”.
6 *The Leader*, 28 October, 1899
7 *Preston, Lands and People* (H. W. Forster, Cheshire, 1968)
Coincidentally, he was sworn in as a Justice of the Peace for the Central Bailiwick just days before the club was formed.  

At the end of 1896, Braithwaite again stood as a candidate for the Shire Council and was elected, taking the position of President of the Shire of Preston in March of the following year following the resignation of Cr. Isaac Barrow. Amongst Braithwaite’s first tasks was the overseeing of the local celebrations for Queen Victoria’s Jubilee and he was re-elected President in 1897-98.

Braithwaite on the outbreak of the War was now second-in-command of the Victorian Mounted Rifles and in charge of a regiment, and keen to volunteer for active service.

At one stage there was a suggestion he may lead the Victorian Contingent, but at aged 47 with six children under the age of twelve years and no actual combat experience, the authorities perhaps wisely thought Braithwaite’s capabilities could be put to better use. The honour instead went to one of Braithwaite’s closest friends, Captain Duncan McLeish, who was slightly older, but single.

Braithwaite’s senior in Victorian Mounted Rifles, Colonel Tom Price led the Second Victorian Contingent and expressed a wish that Braithwaite would take command of the Rifles, but Braithwaite was again overlooked, the command given to Colonel A. E. Potter. Braithwaite did, however, retain command of the First Battalion of the Rifles.

He was appointed Chairman of the Equipment Board supervising the supplies dispatched to South Africa and on April, 1900 (by which time Australian rather than Colonial forces were raised); Braithwaite became involved in a disagreement with the Federal Minister for Defence over the quality of saddles being supplied to what was now exclusively mounted force.

A number of complaints about the saddles had been published in Melbourne newspapers and the Minister, Mr. Donald Melville, M.L.C. hastily convened a conference just six days before the Fourth Contingent was due to sail between the Military Commandant of Victoria Major General Downes, Braithwaite and his controller of stores, Colonel Cairncross.

When interviewed by the Minister, Braithwaite admitted there were structural defects, but these had been introduced by changes introduced by a Parliamentary committee and that no inferior leather had been used.

When queried about the rapid deterioration in saddles which the Minister claimed to have witnessed at the Training Camp at Langwarrin, Braithwaite blamed the training of the men, suggested that they had been allowed to remain too long in wet conditions for new saddles and that if that they had been treated intelligently from the start that the problems would not have arisen.

"Major Braithwaite further stated that last Saturday he had seen a saddle which had never been ridden on lying out in the pouring rain. He told me he did not believe that the men in camp understood the use of saddles".

The Minister, perhaps bolstered by reports that, despite complaints by men in the saddle, there had been no reports of soreness amongst the horses agreed to allow the Board to implement the recommended changes (effectively replacing an iron loop for the girth straps with a riveted leather equivalent).

Braithwaite was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel on 25 October, 1900 and was elected President of the Master Tanners and Curriers Association, but his local interests continued with him being instrumental in the resurrection of the Preston Rifle Club in March.

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8 The Leader, 24 March, 1900  
11 The Argus, 24 April, 1900  
12 Father of the Victorian Legislative Council", The Argus (obituary), 21 March, 1919  
14 The Argus, 27 July, 1900  
15 The Leader, 24 March, 1900
The original dispute was nothing compared to that that flared with the new Victorian Minister of Defence, Mr. McCulloch the following year.

Braithwaite, noted in *The Argus* as “the owner of a large tannery at Preston”, had acted gratuitously as the Chairman of the Saddlery Board and in late January, 1901 he approached McCulloch and urged that the Sixth Contingent should be equipped exclusively with Victorian saddles.17

(The so-called Sixth Battalion embarked with the Fifth on 15 February, 1901, but was later merged with the latter and there is no record of it in modern history - there are references of a ‘left wing’ and a ‘right wing’ of the Fifth, but nothing to indicate which was which. The intention for the “Sixth” was that they would have been supplied in Cape Town with British-made saddles).

Braithwaite suggested delaying the sailing of the s.s. Orient which was to take both the Fifth and Sixth Contingents. McCulloch, under some public pressure because of a botched public reception at the Exhibition Buildings for returning troops said he was willing to take all the saddles available in the next fortnight, but would not delay the sailing due on 15 February.

Perhaps both men were having a “bad hair” day (they are believed to have been close friends and later patched up their differences).

Braithwaite continued to press the case for the Victoria saddles despite admitting that “no saddles to speak of” could be supplied for the Sixth Contingent in that time as the orders for the 500 required for the Fifth were not complete and again suggested that the sailing be delayed till the end of the month.

The debate degenerated to the point where Braithwaite claimed that McCulloch was putting Australian lives at risk by putting men in inferior saddles; McCulloch declared this “nonsense”.

Braithwaite retorted it was the Minister that was talking nonsense and told McCulloch “he would hear more about the matter”, at which stage the Minister declined to tolerate such remarks in his own office and ordered Braithwaite to leave the room (in Braithwaite’s terms, he was told to “clear out”).

Unlike many of those that had political ambitions of varying degrees, Braithwaite rarely commented on topics of either local or wider interest in the Leader, but the issue of 2 February, 1901 (the pages carrying heavy black borders following the death of Queen Victoria) carried a report on the incident, obviously with some prodding from Braithwaite himself.18

After the earlier spat with Melville over the quality of saddles, Braithwaite left no stone unturned and the following appeared in The Leader on 10 November, 1900 just after the First Victorian Regiment embarked for return to Australia,

VICTORIAN SADDLERY

PRAISE FROM HIGH QUARTERS

“Colonel Braithwaite is in receipt of the following interesting letter from Captain Purcell in regard to Victorian Saddlery”:

“Knowing what an interest you took in the saddlery of the Victorian Imperial Regiment and that the very successful result is largely due to your energy, I feel it my duty to write you on the matter. The saddlery has won golden opinions all over Africa. Lord Errol, Colonel Wright, Colonel McCaj (N.S.W), Major Benson (C.S.O., Lord Methuen), Lord Chesham and many others, whose notice has been drawn to it, spoke very highly of it, and it is generally admitted that we have the most serviceable saddlery in South Africa”.

“I was issued with a new lot of bridles for 120 horses of my squadron just previous to leaving Marandellas for Bulawayo and I had to parade the squadron before the O.C. L.C. and Bases. The bridles issued were very neat and nice, but quite unsuitable for campaigning. The nose bands were so small that a horse could not open his mouth, and some of them, in endeavouring to do so, broke the bridles…”

“…the Victorian bridles had been rejected and cast in a heap, but after the inspection we were ordered to take to them again, which we did with pleasure, and they are as good as new today, while 100 of the new bridles which I had with remounts were in pieces a fortnight afterward... I have done nearly 700 miles with my squadron - one march of 125 miles, another of 310, including a forced march of 110 miles in 3 days, and the rest, in daily marches, and at the present moment I have not a sore back in my squadron. The saddles are a great success, and Victoria might well feel proud of the saddlery supplied to the V.I. Regiment”.

“...I will never have a prejudice against the productions of Victoria again. You should have seen the N.S.W. free-trade display — rotten saddles, shoddy uniforms, etc. They came to Africa depending on the British Government for decent equipment, while Victoria came out here with her forces fit to take the field at a moment’s notice. I never felt so proud of my own little colony as I have done since I have been in South Africa.”

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16 William McCulloch (1832-1909), Minister of Defence in the Victorian Government from 1895.
18 Preston Leader, 2 February, 1901.
This suggested the board with Braithwaite as president had already supplied the saddles and other leather equipment that went with the 3rd, 4th and forthcoming 5th Contingents and suggested that the latter shipment had been supplied a lower rate than the earlier two.

The manufacturers had requested "a comparatively small advance" for the supply of the 6th contingent, but the Minister had refused to consider it.

Through the unnamed reporter, Braithwaite claimed he had approached the Minister at the specific request of the financial controller of the Board, taking with him a representative of one of the leading saddlery firms with the intention of discussing price, but the Minister had simply told him that if the saddles could not be made in a fortnight, there was no point in making them regardless of the cost.

The article also pointed out that there had been "many innuendoes thrown out as to Colonel Braithwaite's 'interested motives' as a leather manufacturer, but 'these are as unwarranted as they are absurd, as the colonel refuses to supply leather either directly or indirectly, and gives his services to the Government and the nation for nothing'.

The Orient ultimately sailed pretty much on schedule on 15 February, 1901, along with the Argus and City of Lincoln transporting over 1,000 men and 1,100 horses to Cape Town.

The spat between the two men apparently blew over fairly quickly, and perhaps the quality of the equipment supplied locally can best be illustrated by an anecdote from Winty Calder's (one of Braithwaite's grand-daughters) "A Far-Famed Name : Braithwaite of Preston" suggests an incident where a large party of Boers overran an Australian supply depot, and when the outnumbered Australians returned, they discovered that only Victorian saddles had been taken!

Braithwaite resigned from the Shire Council in 1909 to take an extended holiday in the "Old World" but in response to public demands re-entered the chambers in 1911. Now Colonel Braithwaite, he was again elected President of Preston-shire on September 2, 1913 and still held the position at the outbreak of the First World War.

His only son, Captain William McCarthy Braithwaite, educated at South Preston, Melbourne Grammar and Melbourne University was killed in action at St. Quentin in France on October 3, 1918, just three weeks before the cessation of hostilities. He previously was awarded a Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry at Bullecourt in 1917.

Braithwaite senior in 1919 donated to the Melbourne Grammar School bonds to the value of £1500 in the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works to be used for scholarships to commemorate his son's name, "preference to be given to sons of those serving in the A.I.F".

By coincidence, Braithwaite junior's ultimate commander, General Charles Rosenthal owed part of his position to Braithwaite senior - Rosenthal lived in Preston in the early 1890s and was well-known as the organist at the All Saints Church. After shifting to Sydney, Rosenthal was keen to join the Army and was accepted after Braithwaite (then second-in-charge of the Victorian Light Horse) provided an official with a glowing recommendation on Rosenthal.

William Braithwaite died from bronchial pneumonia in a nursing home at the Portland Place Hospital in London on August 5, 1922.

The late president was overseas with his wife Louisa on a trip to visit William junior's grave at Gouy, France Braithwaite himself had previously visited the grave in 1920, but his wife was too distressed at the time to make the arduous trip.

For a man who spent more than thirty years in the volunteer services, it was perhaps ironic that he passed away on August 5, the anniversary of the Empire's declaration of the First World War. It was perhaps even more bizarre that he was buried just one day before the fourth anniversary of his son's death.

His body was freighted back to Australia on s.s. Diogenes and a memorial service scheduled for St. Paul's Cathedral on September 27. Delays en route pushed the proposed date of the service back to October 2, and even then, the surviving members of his family in Melbourne got a fright when the coffin could not be found when the ship arrived early the previous day.

After an extensive search, it was finally located under a large pile of ropes in one of the holds.

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19 A Far-Famed Name : Braithwaite of Preston, Winty Calder, 1990 (available at Darebin Libraries)
20 The Leader, 6 September, 1913
21 The Leader, 12 August, 1922 for full obituary
22 The Leader, 23 September, 1922
23 The Leader, 7 October, 1922
The funeral service was conducted in St. Paul’s cathedral and the funeral cortege was led by the Preston Citizen’s Band, of which Braithwaite was President immediately before his death.

Colonel William Braithwaite was finally laid to rest in Coburg Cemetery.

He was 69 years of age and left his widow Louisa, who sadly arrived back in Australia eight days after her husband was laid to rest. Although there is no surviving documentation, it is believed a service for Braithwaite was held in England prior to his remains being loaded for return to Australia.

ON RIFLE CLUBS AND RANGES

Victoria since its foundation in the mid-1830s had relied (like New South Wales) on the presence of British military units stationed in Melbourne and Sydney for their civil defence.

Following the discovery of gold in Victoria in the early 1850s, the massive influx of population, combined with the uprising at the Eureka Stockade and real fears that Russian ships would enter Port Phillip Bay and raid the gold-laden ships at anchor, pressure mounted for a local militia force to strengthen the 800 British men based near the corner of Latrobe and William Streets.

The movement for a local civil defence force drew favourable consideration from the local government, and despite the fact that it was illegal to raise any armed force in any part of the British Empire except with express approval of the Crown, several local corps were formed (the Geelong Volunteer Rifle Corps to be the biggest in Victoria and in fact larger than any similar unit in Sydney where the volunteer movement was legalised in August).

(Oddly enough, the Geelong unit was first organised by local German settlers under the title of The German Corps, and was so popular many "Englishmen" joined their ranks, and the Germans good-naturedly gave way and allowed the name to be changed).

The colonies at Hobart and Adelaide were also moving towards their own volunteer forces, but the need for a coordinated force in Melbourne became even more obvious following the "Battle of Port Phillip Bay" on 7 September, 1854.

The Use of the Umbrella in Modern Warfare

Sleepy Melburnians heard the sound of cannons and saw the night sky illuminated with rockets and rumours spread like wild fire "the Russians have come" and were attacking ships at anchor in the Bay.

_The Argus_ reported their office being besieged by a multitude of enquiries as to what was happening.

Dozens of the (very) irregular forces were seen crossing Princes Bridge rushing down the Sandridge Road with armed with guns, pick axes, clubs, and even that deadliest of weapon at close quarters, the umbrella, and even the Colonial Secretary was spotted riding full gallop over the bridge to repel the invasion.

Alas, it was all an unfortunate misunderstanding.

There was not a Russian ship to be seen, the fun and games started by the crew of the steamer _Great Brighton_ who celebrated the ships release from three week’s quarantine after smallpox was discovered on board by firing off guns and rockets, several other crews around the harbour joining in the fun.

The whole affair appears to have been a massive breakdown in communications.

It was a prescribed offence to fire cannon within the confines of the Bay - although the "Russians" may not have understood this - but the ships had obtained permission for the discharge from the Harbour Master without any stipulation as to the time of the celebration.

The Volunteer Corps Act

Undoubtedly embarrassed by the whole affair, the Government took action, and by 31 October, a draft Volunteer Corps Act was presented for its first reading.

The Colonial-Secretary in presenting the bill confirmed the Act was primarily a formalisation of the reality:

"... it was a measure to enable the inhabitants of the colony to do what they already done of the own accord; namely to form themselves into a body for the protection of the colony ...".

The main point of debate was whether a Volunteer force should be allowed to elect its own officers - some concerned that this would leave the corps outside of the Crown’s control, others claiming that existing volunteers would be reluctant to accept officers appointed by the Government.
Eventually a compromise was reached - the appointment of commissioned officers (rank of Lieutenant and above) required approval of the Governor, non-commissioned officers could be appointed by the relevant corps.

After three readings, the Act passed into law on 28 November, 1854.

Several late additions to the Bill were agreed to - each corps was allowed its own rules and regulations subject to final approval by the Governor; each volunteer was required to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown; each corps to be inspected by an officer of the regular forces every six months; horses travelling to drills or to exercise to be exempted from road tolls; in times of actual conflict, volunteer corps could be summoned into action in times of invasion or general alarm; that in such situations, volunteer corps could be placed under the command of the regular forces; volunteers while in actual action could demand pay and billets in line with the regular forces, and that allowances could be paid to widows of families of any volunteer killed while in action, or to the volunteer himself if wounded.

It was the latter two of these (predicably those that would impact the purse strings), one protagonist against the Bill asking what would be the impact "if 30,000 or 40,000 were called up". As a result, at the behest of the Attorney General, an additional clause was added to allow a limit to be set of the size of the Volunteer Corps (ultimately set to a maximum of 2,000).

Around a week later, the first three senior officers of the Victorian Volunteer Regiment were announced - the appropriately-named Colonel Valiant as Field Officer, W. A. Anderson, Esq., John Hodgson, Esq., Major.

(Initial reports used the spelling "Valliant", but the Government Gazette reveals he was Thomas J Valiant, Lieutenant Colonel of the British 40th Regiment then stationed in Melbourne.

The first corps to announce their officers (on January 9, 1855) was the Melbourne Volunteer Rifle Brigade, followed by the Geelong Rifles three days later. The Geelong Brigade however were the first to have their Rules and Regulations approved.

There were a number of attempts to form a Victoria-wide volunteer unit, but none came to fruition, instead the local corps being favoured.

Within a year, operating volunteer corps included the Melbourne Volunteer Rifle Regiment (originally at the Princes Bridge Barracks and later the corner of William and Little Latrobe Streets), the Richmond Rifles, the Emerald Hill Rifles, the East Collingwood Rifles and the Fitzroy Rifles, the latter commanded by Judge Redmond Barry.

Cavalry (usually known as Mounted Rifles) and artillery units (including a shore battery at Williamstown, the prime site still occupied by the military followed, and by 1860, the Act had been amended to allow a Volunteer force of 10,000.

**The Great Battle of Werribee**

One of the great events in the life of Melbourne in 1862 was "The Great Battle of the Werribee", a military exercise planned between two "armies" numbering some 2,400 volunteers from north and south of Melbourne at the Werribee River.

A crowd estimated at around 15,000 (even games of the new craze of "football" were abandoned for the day) was described as perhaps the biggest that Melbourne had seen at a single event turned out to watch the fun, but to the disappointment of all, rain washed out most of the two days without hardly a shot exchanged in "anger".

Despite enthusiasm, initial efforts to coordinate and maintain supplies to an effective force rather than a group of individual units with their own rules, regulations and operating standards were only moderately successful.

The need for a more efficient defence force was highlighted in January, 1862, the Russian frigate *Sventlana* armed with 40 guns visited Melbourne, the ship foregoing the traditional salute to the shore batteries, the captain claiming he was aware the shore guns had no ammunition on hand to return the compliment.

A similar situation arose the following year when another Russian ship, the *Bogytar* arrived in Melbourne with apparently no resolution to the problem of ammunition, *The Argus* noting that "for several hours, the Bogytar had the shipping at anchorage and her mercy and other vessels not so friendly may be so merciful".
The "Effective System"

Most of the Volunteer corps with the exception of mounted units were effectively disbanded with the introduction of what was known as the "Effective System" in October 1863 (Act No. 183, An Act to amend the Law relating to Volunteer Corps).

The new system set attendance and performance levels that established an existing volunteer as "effective" - as an example, for the year ending 1 September, 1863, 24 drills including 12 parades of the corps, OR undertaken a course in musketry OR completed his recruiting drill in September, 1863.

"Effectives" were eligible to re-enrol under the new system, existing volunteers that did not meet the standards (or new recruits) went back to square one to undertake basic training again.

The new Act also defined acceptable levels of drill and training to be undertaken each year for a volunteer to be automatically able to continue in service and a minimum corps size, initially of 50 'effectives', later of 75.

Commanding Officers were also held financially responsible for the performance of their units - they were debited for training (£182-10 for drill instruction) and uniforms (now standard Government issue), and were given credits for the number of volunteers that completed a nominated level of training (24 drills and eight sessions of firing 120 balls in practice).

Buildings primarily used for drill or other volunteer activities were exempted from local municipality charges.

The first general muster under the new regulations came on January 1, 1864 and it was reported that at least half of the volunteer force was made up of new recruits.

Our Local Army

In August 1859, the first moves came to establish a brigade in Brunswick. The two men behind the move had combined late in the previous year to found the Brunswick Cricket Club, still in existence today.

G. W. Frederick Grylls was the Town Clerk, whilst Joseph George was a local identity that ran the Brunswick Dispensary, Deputy Registrar and Post Office, offering amongst his services “… tooth extraction without pain, children vaccinated between the hours of 10 to 11am with matter obtained only from very healthy children”.

The early meetings were just moderately successful, The Brunswick and Pentridge Press suggesting "the volunteer idea does not appear to have been taken up with enthusiasm".

A few weeks later another meeting was held in the National School Room, Pentridge in Bell-Street West. The Press noted W. T. Champ, Esquire in the chair and another eight members joined.

After a couple of other meetings, the brigade numbered 33 and appears to have been more successful in their endeavours to the north, with the company adopting the name of the Pentridge Volunteer Rifles.

Presumably with the approval of the Governor, plain old W. Champ (Esquire) later emerged as Captain Champ, 24 a title that later writers of Boy's Own Annuals could only have dreamt of! (To be fair to his many achievements, Champ had already served a brief term as the first Premier of Tasmania).

Champ's connection with the district started when he was appointed Inspector-General of Prisons in 1857, and as well as devoting his time to the Volunteers (where he ultimately reached the rank of Colonel), Champ also had a brief stint in politics, becoming the M.L.A. for the Electorate of East Bourke which covered most of Melbourne's north and northwest in 1871.

The Northcote Division

There was no indication of when the movement spread to Northcote, but in August of the following year, the Brunswick Press reported "a public meeting at the Peacock Inn for the purpose of increasing the strength of the Northcote Division of the Pentridge Company of the Volunteer Rifles".

The Press also noted the meeting "being at a time when HM troops have been called in to assist in a neighbouring colony", a reference to English and Irish Regiments sent to New Zealand during the Maori Wars, several of which were billeted in Melbourne on their way to or from the battles.

The meeting was addressed at some length by a Mr. McDonald who agitated for a drill ground to be established in Northcote, stating that for the Northcote men it was ",, a great inconvenience from the distance they had to travel to parade".

Captain Champ agreed that it was desirable to have grounds for a general parade more central and within
“half an hour’s walk from Northcote”. In the interim, Champ suggested, “Sergeant-Major Smith would
come to Northcote two or three times a week to instruct recruits”.

The full strength of the Northcote division was not revealed, but it was suggested that around another
dozen men joined up at the meeting.

A couple of weeks later, another meeting was held at the Wesleyan School Room in Northcote in aid of the
Band Fund of the “Pentridge Volunteers” where the total number of volunteers was put at 89.

The schoolroom next to the Wesleyan Chapel was used by many of Northcote’s earliest sporting and
community groups for meetings and lay on the east side of High Street slightly to the north of Bastings
Street. One report in the Northcote Leader of 1955 suggested it was where numbers 250 and 252 High
Street now stand.

Theophilus J. Sumner

The Mayor of Brunswick, Theophilus J. Sumner was a prominent supporter of the volunteers and threw
his weight behind the movement by offering a prize of a silver cup for competition between members of the
Pentridge Rifles.

Sumner was also behind the acquisition of a shipment of Lancaster rifles for practice “at the butts at
Pentridge and at Northcote, ammunition issued at 1d. per round”.

He later became a Member of the Legislative Assembly and in 1874 donated a silver cup for competition
between the rowing teams of the public schools; and around the same time presented Wesley College with
a racing shell dubbed “Egbert” to contest the trophy.

The Sumner family had a large property called “Stony Park” including a 21-roomed house in the southern
Brunswick bordering on the Merri Creek, just across from where Merri Park and Northcote High School
now stand.

The family also had an extensive holding on the Northcote side of the Creek, this property known as
Sumner’s Paddock and was used for cricket and possibly football in later years but it seems unlikely given
McDonald’s concern at the distance that Northcote men had to travel that the Volunteers used Sumner’s
Brunswick property, thus necessitating a detour via the rickety water pipe bridge and North Fitzroy.

There is evidence to suggest that the Volunteer Corps used the land between the Pentridge stockade and
the Merri Creek for their parades and practice.

One of the original allotments of land sold in Preston was ultimately acquired by Timothy Shepherd and
became known as Shepherd’s Run. The land stretched from between Bell Street and Murray Road from
High Street, but just where the western border lay is open to some debate.

Some histories of Preston have the tract ending at James Street.

While this became the boundary between Coburg-Pentridge and Preston, the districts were many years
away from definition when the land was originally sold in 1838 and it seems highly probable that the sales
would have used the Merri Creek as the natural delineation of the tracts offered.

The Merri Creek theory is supported by a small history of the Preston area published in 1926 by The
Preston Progress, a short-lived local newspaper.

An account of Shepherd’s life and family suggests “a rifle range was situated on the western bank of the
Merri Creek and the Volunteer Corps used to hold their reviews on Mr. Shepherd’s property”.

If this was in fact the area used, it placed the local Volunteer Corps aptly enough immediately behind the
Pentridge stockade!

The competition for Sumner’s silver cup came off in January of the following year, the prize being taken off
by William Gardiner, who scored nine targets at 200 yards, six at 400 and four at the maximum range of
600 yards, a tally described as “the highest yet made in the colony at the distance”.

The men of the north obviously took up the loyalist cause.

One brief history of Coburg suggests that the Corps totalled 211 men in 1861 and rather optimistically
that “it was the biggest in the colony”, but in 1862, Bell’s Life published a table showing the numbers and
ranks of the various companies across Melbourne.

In terms of the total number of men involved, the Pentridge Division was still significant, being the fifth
largest overall with three Officers, five Sergeants and 83 in the ranks.
There are references to Brunswick, Pentridge and Northcote companies, but nothing mention of representation from Preston, whose volunteers appear to have been embraced within the other three units.

One of the area's first settlers, Edward Wood at the formation meeting of what was to become the Preston Rifle Club in 1885 described himself as "an old volunteer" and recalled 'Preston came out strongly twenty five years ago when the population was very small to what it is now, she could muster twenty or thirty volunteers'.

**The East Collingwood Rifles**

Rather surprisingly, the *Bell's Life* report had the East Collingwood Rifles, one of the larger brigades in later years, comprising just 80 in the ranks, with two officers and seven Sergeants.

The proximity of the East Collingwood Company was perhaps one of the reasons that a Northcote brigade never flourished during the 1860s when the movement was at its peak.

Their butts (or rifle range) were noted as being “near the corner of the Heidelberg and Northcote roads” and were closer to Northcote than many of today would think.

Collingwood then extended to the Plenty Road (now Queen's Parade), but Northcote at the time and up until about 1873 included the wedge between the Creek, Queen's Parade and Rushall Crescent and Heidelberg Road, sometimes referred to in contemporary reports as "Lower Northcote".

Landmarks within this wedge noted over the years include the Northcote Arms Hotel (the bluestone building still standing on the corner of Rushall Crescent and Queen's Parade and believed to date back to 1854), the Old Colonist's Homes behind today's Rushall Station, described when opened in 1872 as "in Northcote", the same as the Melbourne Corporation municipal quarry, on the Merri Creek where the Epping line swings north to Merri station.

The location of the East Collingwood Butts, believed to have been in the triangle formed by today's Queen's Parade, Heidelberg Road and the Creek remained a concern for Northcote people for some years.

In November, 1861, a correspondent to *The Argus* bitterly complained that while walking on the northern side of the creek "... I heard bullets more than once past my ears", that other residents had undergone the same risk; bullets had hit houses and broken windows in Northcote and could be regularly be picked up in local gardens and on the banks of the creek.

Whether or not his supremely sensible suggestion that the East Collingwood club should remove their butts - perhaps both in the military vernacular of the day and in today’s rather less attractive connotation - to the valley of the Merri Creek between the Heidelberg Road bridge and Dight’s Falls (to the east of the later Victoria Park) is not known.

"An Old Subscriber" also complained around a year later that while walking near the Fitzroy Butts (believed to have been at the eastern end of the Edinburgh Gardens) that "the whirr" of a rifle bullet saluted my ears. I am confident that it touched neither target nor butts, but flew straight on towards Lower Northcote'.

**The Victorian Mounted Rifles**

Civil defence in Victoria took another major step forward in 1885 with the formation of the Victorian Mounted Rifle, a foundation member of whom was William Braithwaite.

In May of the same year, he approached the Council of the then Jika Shire (the Shire adopted the name Preston in September of the same year), seeking support for a plan to establish a local volunteer defence force.

Under the auspices of Cr. Ralph Hutton, it was decided to hold a meeting "to consider the advisability of forming a Rifle Corps" at the Forester's Hall (in High Street just south of Wood Street).

(This was one of the more lively of the usually mundane Shire of Jika meetings - after a somewhat heated debate, the Council refused permission for Preston Football Club to play at Preston Park in line with a previous decision of the Council", and, given the expiration of the lease, to move meetings from the existing offices behind the Junction Hotel to the Forester’s Hall).

Much to everyone's surprise, neither the President of the Shire or any of the Councillors with the exception of Cr. Bartlett were amongst the gathering of around 100 people, the *Collingwood Mercury* - which at that stage acted as the "local" paper for Preston and Northcote - suggesting, "... it seems that they thought by calling the meeting they had done their duty".
Braithwaite chaired the meeting and the motion to form the Corps was moved by Frank Olney and seconded by William Wilkinson, the town’s leading solicitor, but it was a local firebrand in Frank Donovan that spoke against the plan, demanding more particulars as to exactly what form the proposed Corps would take.

Wilkinson towards the end of the meeting suggested “Mr. Donovan has an Irish face and name but not an Irishman’s heart” - to which Donovan simply relied ‘you are a fool’.

Donovan in a later letter to the Mercury pointed out with some justification the confusion that had prevailed at the meeting over the legal differences between a “Volunteer Corps” and a “Rifle Club” and that his opposition came because the first speaker at the meeting had moved for the formation of a Volunteer Corps, the next speaker, however, seconded the creation of a Rifle Club, claiming they were one and the same.

Donovan also suggested the Volunteer Corps were designed for:

“… a class that had more leisure at their disposal and where eight hours was general, as compared to Preston where we have to work more hours” and that as a result, the local citizens could only support the Corps … “if we countenanced the volunteers, we would have to devote the Saturday afternoon usually applied to athletics”.

His objections over whether the locals wanted a Volunteer Corps or a Rifle Club proved correct, and suggest that maybe Braithwaite should have done his homework before the gathering.

A subsequent meeting was held at the Free Library on July 3 where Braithwaite suggested 70 men had agreed to join, but the meeting verified Donovan’s thoughts on the uncertain aims of the original meeting.

Braithwaite had written to what he called “Head Quarters”, only to be told by a Colonel Hutton (no relation to the local Cr. Hutton) that there was no intention of establishing a Volunteer Infantry Corps in Preston, but Braithwaite if he wished could form a Mounted Rifle Corps.

He then approached the leader of the Volunteer forces, Lieutenant-Colonel Tom Price, who confused the issue further by indicating a new Volunteer Rifle Corps could only be dealt with by the Victorian Parliament and suggested a Rifle Club instead.

The meeting had little option to downgrade their ambitions and formed a Rifle Club on the motion of Cr. Bartlett and seconded by Edward Wood junior.

Wood then told the meeting arrangements had been made with a Mrs Henderson to use her paddock, the only condition - and a perfectly reasonable one at that - being ‘when firing at their target they should not hit her cows’.

Perhaps this lack of what would have ostensibly been slow-moving targets dispirited a few of the gathering as when Braithwaite called for volunteers, only 10 from a total of around 100 came forward.

Another handful joined after the meeting but the numbers still fell short as the minimum number of members for a Rifle Club as laid down by the Minister of Defence was 20.

Braithwaite told the Collingwood Mercury that he “was heartily ashamed of the men of Preston” but the newspaper noted that others had since joined and the total had reached 32.

The club was officially formed at the Preston Free Library on 23 July with 26 members, the elected officials William West, president; Frank Olney, vice-president; James Hurlstone, treasurer, and Braithwaite as secretary. The club adopted the rules of the Victorian Rifle Association.

The first drill was held on 15 August, the Mercury suggesting:“many of the squad were rather awkward, but the drill sergeant states that they compared well with many a squad whom he has put through their facings for the first time”.

The sergeant’s opinion carried some weight as the club had managed to secure the service of a local resident, Sergeant Kedwards, who was noted having held the post of drill instructor in a Royal Irish brigade while stationed in India in 1882.

Unlike many other clubs who were content with the “fun” of rifle practice, the Preston unit announced that they would do the hard yards by also holding regular drill and marching exercises (which were optional under the regulations laid down for rifle clubs).
It was noted in early October that Sergeant-Major Wilson, the drill instructor provided for the Victorian Mounted Rifles had visited Preston for the first time to inspect the corps. The Major expressed himself “highly pleased” with the progress made under Sergeant Kedwards, the report concluding “the rifles will be shortly issued”.

Despite Mrs Henderson’s generous offer, the Club eventually established butts in a paddock owned by Cr. James Mooney, a dairy farmer in Spring Street, North Preston.

Braithwaite was appointed probationary Lieutenant of the club on 16 April, 1886 after sitting for the first examinations for commissions in the Victorian Mounted Rifles - one of the first batch of 17 volunteers to be commissioned.

His appointment was confirmed by the Council of Defence on 1 April of the following year, Braithwaite one of a number of probationary Lieutenants promoted to Captain at the same time.

The club held its first official competition on 25 June, 1886, the main prize being a gold medal, offered by Mr. Alex Short for the best shot. In what was described as a close competition over a range of 200 yards.

The report noted the club had both foot and mounted branches, and the prizes were later distributed at a lavish dinner put on by George West at the Preston Library in High Street (then on run on a subscription basis near the corner of Percival Street).

West was described as captain of the club, but this was only in a sense similar to that of being (lower case) captain of any sporting team and not the official military rank of Captain.

Some 70 attended and Short announced he would present the Club with another £10 trophy for competition amongst members over the coming year and before the evening was concluded, another £25 had been raised for prizes.

The gold medal was presented to Frank Olney from Thomastown - West as club captain declined the trophy for second place, the prize of a Morris tube going to Private Richard Staples.

The report did historians of over 100 years later few favours -there were two devices over the years called a Morris Tube. The earlier tube (and most probably Staple’s award) was an aiming sight designed to be clipped along the barrel of the standard military rifle of the day, the Martini-Henry.

A slightly later device of around the turn of the century was a tube that could be inserted into the barrel of a high-powered rifle enabling it to fire a smaller calibre bullet - thus allowing it to be used in a drill hall or a restricted space without the need for a full rifle range. Morris tube ranges were installed in both the Northcote Town Hall and Preston Shire Hall in 1900 for use of the local rifle clubs.

November saw the Club in what appears to have been its first inter-club competition shoot. In a fair test of the rudimentary transport of the day, clubs from Maryborough, Ferntree Gully and Preston met at, of all places, Williamstown. Maryborough took out the competition with 535 targets, Ferntree Gully 468 and new Preston club finished with 458.

The club, like most others, was intimately involved with the local community, a report on a feté to raise funds for a second Church of England Church in the town (the original St. Mary’s on the corner of Plenty Road and Tyler Street, the newer building in Murray Road on the intersection of High Street) suggesting “no lotteries were encouraged but a rifle gallery served the same purpose, and gave members of the local rifle corps an opportunity of showing their skill in hitting the bull’s eye”.

Wednesday, 4 May, 1887 was described as a red-letter day for the club when it staged first big open event at Mooney’s Paddock. Many of the businesses around the district closed to allow both club members and spectators to attend (there was a general movement at the time for Wednesday afternoons to be a half-holiday as virtually all men worked Saturday mornings).

The day included four shooting competitions, the main event being a match for a handsome silver cup, valued at six guineas and donated by Cr. T. A. Patterson with a silver biscuit barrel and gold pencil case for the placetgeters.

Messrs West and Day contributed a gold locket and silver pin for another event “for those who have not scored 50 points at any previous competition”. (Editor’s note : Do not stand in front of these competitors!)}

Seemingly to ensure that no-one went away empty handed, The Merchant’s Shoot had more than 20 prizes donated by small local traders, including hams, bags of flour, joints of meat, barrels of tea, boots, slippers, a clock, an accordion and a photo album.
The main event resulted in a runaway win to Richard Staples with 82 points, each shooter attempting targets at four different ranges.

The remarkable part of Staples effort was that he registered his highest score at the maximum range of 600 yards to beat George Apsted on 72 points and the latter’s brother Frank on 71.

Staples was also the winner of the Merchant’s Shoot - his tally of 25 points earned him a dozen pot plants donated by one of his neighbours in Spring Street, the nurseryman and florist, William Bartlett, but it was the second place-getter, Sergeant Merrett (who was also listed on 25 points (collecting a ham donated by Cr. Thomas Patterson) that perhaps was the “dark horse” in the local competition.

The fact that he was identified by rank indicates that Merrett was a member of the “official” Volunteer Corps and perhaps sent as an encouragement by the Corps in support of the local club.

As we will later see, he was not exactly “Sergeant” Merrett in future years! [page 64]

The shooting was interspersed with interludes from “an efficient band” and several foot races and novelty events for the children before the day finished up with the Ladies Bracelet, donated by none other than Captain Braithwaite.

But think ye not that the Preston women-folk were a bunch of rootin’, tootin’ and shootin’ Annie Oakleys!

The men did the noisy work on behalf of the gentler sex, names being drawn from a hat and each of the ladies being represented by a male competitor with the pairings revealed after the event.

Courtesy of George Apsted, the prize ultimately went to Mrs Alex Short, a result described as highly satisfactory, given Mr Short’s donation of the major prize for the earlier interclub shoot”

Undaunted by a busy day at Mooney’s Paddock, the members then returned for a concert at the Bradford Hall where the afternoon’s prizes were distributed.

From the viewpoint of one young lady of the district, the concert turned out to be a poor substitute for the planned Grand Ball ...

"... I am sitting in my bedroom, fully dressed for a ball, low neck, short sleeves and properly gauntleted with the season’s flowers in my hair ... my spirits are at boiling point and my feet seem performing the military valse with my own dear future partner from whom I received two weeks ago an invitation to a ball to be given this evening by the Preston Rifle Corps ... it is rumoured that the ball is postponed and I will place no more faith in the Preston Rifles ... if I had the Captain here, I would treat him to a bit of my mind, if I did not pull his hair, for I feel savage ...”

Cr. Short’s trophy was to be awarded to the first shooter at the Rifle Club’s regular meetings to win three events, although not necessarily in succession and the prize was still being contested in July.

By this stage, the club’s activities featured almost weekly in the Collingwood Mercury

“There are few places having so limited a population where sports of a healthy and popular kind are more liberally subsidised by private patrons than Preston ...”

Collingwood Mercury, July 1, 1887

The shooting season for some reason was during the winter months and the club had its final regular meeting late in August, but in October organised its first "grand competition" with events spread over a full week.

The weather wasn’t as kind as it could have been, the first four days in particular keeping many competitors (who were offered free rail transport) and spectators from attending, but as well as many of the Melbourne suburban clubs being represented, the event attracted competitors from as far afield as Walhalla, Murtoa, Cerberus, Maryborough, Geelong, Diamond Creek and the Murray River.

The locals were more than competitive, winning several events with the Apsted brothers Frank and George, Richard Staples, Frank West and William Michel prominent in many events.

The last day added some variety with a Revolver match, taken out by Sergeant Mawson of the Geelong Corps who also featured in many of the rifle matches without quite being able to take off the main prize.

Another unique event saw competitors pay sixpence for the chance to fire at a bull’s eye just eight inches in diameter from a distance of 400 yards, those achieving the feat to receive five shillings as a prize.

25 Quoted from “A Far Famed Name - Braithwaite of Preston”, W. Calder, 1990. The publication suggests the diary entry was from that of Louisa Patterson, sister of the aforementioned Cr. Thomas Patterson and fiancée of “the Captain”, William Braithwaite - the couple married on 9 November of the same year.
It was suggested the event was popular, but how many sixpences were collected was not revealed. Some 32 prizes were awarded, and perhaps to recoup some expenses, the club staged another match with the range extended to 500 yards - probably a nice little "earner" as the feat was only achieved five times, three of those courtesy of Staples who seems to have been something of an expert over longer distances.

The *Mercury* declared the meeting a resounding success, and forecast an even bigger and better meeting the following years after noting that visiting competitors were agreeably surprised at the quality of the rifle range.

But for reasons unknown, the Preston Rifle club virtually disappeared as quickly as it came.

The *Mercury* noted competitions to be held against Walhalla and Diamond Creek, and local shoots were held until around the middle of 1888.

The last mention of the Club came in August when the *Mercury* noted that plans for another grand open competition were being made "at an early date".

Although none of the club's activities ever attracted much attention in Melbourne newspapers, *The Argus* contains a fleeting reference to Preston being represented at a meeting of rifle club secretaries held in December, 1888 to consider means of making the movement more effective.

From that point, there are a few references to a Preston detachment of the Victorian Mounted Rifles under Braithwaite's command, sadly in insufficient detail to reveal whether this included former members of the Rifle Club.

**RESURRECTION OF THE RIFLE CLUBS**

The hostilities in South Africa from late 1899 brought a predictable revival in local rifle clubs to the point that were almost daily announcements in the press of proposed new clubs all over the colony, but there were restrictions.

The existing Defence Act provided that clubs on the recommendation of the Council of Defence could be authorised by the Governor in Council, but with the proviso than no new rifle club could be established within ten miles of an existing club.

This, in principle, was fine for country areas, but restrictive in the extreme within Melbourne where many of the clubs formed during the mid-1880s had disbanded.

(The other requirement was at least 20 members between the ages of 18 and 45 prepared to take an oath binding them to a prescribed level of practice time and behaviour).

By March, 1900, it was estimated there were between 80 and 90 clubs in Victoria and around 3,500 registered members - 1,000 estimated to have joined in the preceding two months - who received 140 rounds of ammunition free and thereafter could purchase at special rates.

They were, however, required to purchase their own rifles - reduced in previous months to a nominal rate of 11/6d., but given Privates in the first colonial contingents that sailed to South Africa were paid 4/6d per day, half-a-week's wages and considered a disincentive to those wishing to join a rifle club.

Members were also entitled to wear uniform - khaki with green trimmings - but again as they had to purchase these, the uniform was rarely worn (as a small concession, the Railways provided free travel to all musters, drills and parades).

There was also a mounting problem with the supply of weapons - both the clubs and militia had used the Martini-Henry rifle, somewhat dated, but ideal for practice shooting as it had limited range and penetrating power.

The issue of Martini-Henry's was, however, on hold as the military commanders had decreed that the infantry volunteer forces should be equipped with the later Martini-Enfield used by the troops in South Africa, said to be so powerful that they would soon rip the iron targets used by the rifle clubs "to shreds" (the militia used an alternate canvas target).

The final difficulty was that in many areas (including Preston and to a lesser extent Northcote), Crown land was not available for rifle ranges which had strict requirements for safety reasons, including one that on level sites, a distance of 2,000 yards had to be clear behind the targets, although this could be less if there was a natural barrier such as steep hill.
The Conference

The clamour for new clubs was such that the Minister of Defence, Mr Melville, called an urgent conference for 16 March, 1900 at Victorian Barracks of captains and representatives of all the existing clubs with the objective of integrating the blossoming rifle movement becoming a more significant part of Victoria’s defences.

The meeting was chaired by Colonel J. M. Templeton, who had organized the conference and who was said to have some 40 years’ experience with rifle clubs. The principle points of discussion were the rescinding of the ten-mile limit; abolition of the maximum age of 45 and a reduction in the minimum to 16 years; alteration of a rule that a rifle club member must resign if he joined the volunteers or militia, and finally the adoption of a plan to expedite the issue of the Martini-Enfield to the militia, thus making the Martini-Henry available to rifle clubs.

The conference involved 120 delegates and resolved to have a special military officer appointed under the direct control of the Minister to take charge of rifle clubs and that officer should have a seat on the Council of Defence; that districts be re-adjusted and reduced based on the railway facilities between the headquarters of the district and the surrounding units; and that the radius of ten miles be retained for country areas, but a lesser distance be adopted in populous centres (not specified, to be left at the discretion of the Military Commandant).

(Templeton took the position on the Council of Defence and stood down as President of the Victorian Rifles Association, replaced by Major General Francis Downes, the Military Commandant of Victoria.)

On the supply of weapons, the conference suggested that a stock-in-hand of small bore rifles suitable for short-range practice should be issued; ten to clubs with more than 60 members, seven to those with between 40 and 60, and five to each on the smaller clubs.

On the merits of the two rifles in use, there was considerable discussion with the delegates favouring the Martini-Enfield, a general opinion (although by no means unanimous) being that the Martini-Henry “was not good enough”. The level of free ammunition was recommended at 300 rounds with effective members to receive and addition 100 rounds; thereafter issued as 2/6d per 100 rounds.

The conference also recommended a form of incentive scheme (nominally a “capitation fee”) based on members achieving target scores and adopted the name of “Victorian Rifles” rather than “Rifle Clubs”.

Mr Melville, the Minister for Defence, issued a statement expressing overall agreement with the resolutions, expressing some doubts as to whether the minimum age should be arbitrarily lowered, instead suggesting youths should be assessed on a case-by-case basis; also over the proposed capitation fee, perhaps predictably expressing concerns over the proposed costs.

There had been plans for a special camp for rifle club members at Langwarrin over the Easter weekend when it was proposed to distributed the Martine-Enfield’s, but this was eventually cancelled with the training of the proposed Fourth Imperial Regiment taking precedence.

Both before and after the conference, there were almost daily announcements of plans to form new clubs here, there and everywhere, and by May, Melville was forced to raise the minimum number of members to 40.

The Preston Rifle Club

It was no great surprise when the President of the Preston-shire, Cr. William Paterson 26 called a meeting at the Shire Hall on the Wednesday 27 following the conference with the aim of forming a rifle club in present; it was even less of shock that Major William Braithwaite was unanimously elected to chair the meeting.

Braithwaite opened by recalling that fifteen years earlier, he had been in exactly the same position, and that seventy names had been registered “but when the swearing-in process came, the seventy dwindled away to fifteen” (laughter), and after due reference to the Preston contingent in South Africa, he emphasised that the club had the right to appoint its own officers and committee.

The latter was also covered by Lieutenant Charles Stewart, who read the guidelines for rifles clubs to the gathering, stressing that once sworn in, the men would for three years render themselves liable in the event of war in the colony to be called on to serve the Queen.

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27 21 March, 1900, reported The Leader, 24 March. The same edition revealed that Braithwaite had just been sworn in as a Justice of the Peace.
Major William Palliser, after an emotion-charged tribute to the late Major George Eddy [page 12], emphasised the need for men to be taught how to take proper sight and aim, especially from a standing position.

The motion to form the club was put by C. Rosenthal 28 and seconded by F. E. Wood and passed unanimously; Braithwaite was elected president, and perhaps remembering the events of fifteen years previous, issued his first order that the 35 men who had given up their names should be sworn in on the spot.

All other officers were held over until a sub-committee had drawn up the club rules, later agreed to be those of the Victorian Rifle Association.

The new club was officially gazetted on 23 April, along with around 20 others. These included a club from the neighbouring Northcote - rather strangely, the district did not support a Rifle Club during the "boom" years of the mid-1880s despite having a population of around four times that of Preston.

A meeting the following week confirmed Braithwaite as President, Lieutenant Charles Stewart and Thomas Broadhurst as vice-presidents, John Lang as secretary, Major Palliser as captain, and a committee of locals including the name of "C. Rosenthal".

It was noted at the time that "no trouble is anticipated as to ranges, there being one already near the reservoir", a reference to the range used by the earlier club.

Whether or not the club actually used the old Mooney's Paddock is uncertain; there are vague references to the availability of a site not being as clear-cut as believed and another that suggested that the club applied to the Council to use a unpopulated section of Tyler street at the eastern end as a range.

Although there was no mention of the Darebin Creek in an article on a proposed practice in June, the advice was that "Bell street is the easiest way", and a report in the Leader on 7 July, 1900 clearly indicates a range in use on the Creek, although not directly as to whether north or south of Bell Street (there are relatively straight sections to either side):

THE PRESTON RIFLE RANGE

EXTRAORDINARY ACT OF VANDALISM

"During Friday night last a deliberate act of vandalism was perpetrated at the ranges of the Preston Rifle club on the Darebin Creek. When the members arrived on Saturday afternoon for the usual practice, it was at once seen that two wooden targets were missing and on inspection it was found they had been bodily removed from the ground in which they had been firmly fixed. Further search resulted in the missing targets being found 200 yards up the creek, broken into pieces so small as to be totally beyond repair … that adults committed the action is evidenced by the imprints of two pairs of hob-nail boots left either side of the holes left by removal of the targets … the object or removing the targets to such a distance was evidently to guard against alarming Cr. Nichol, whose residence is about 300 yards situate to the west of the butts … it is difficult to assign the object of such despicable actions, unless the general opinion prove correct, that it was activated by pro-Boer sympathisers ...".

Fortunately the reference to Cr. Richard Nicol allows us an insight into the actual location, directories of the day have him either on or adjacent to the corner or Raglan and Princess Street, the latter now Chifley Drive. (From what can be ascertained, the culprits were never apprehended).

Practice sessions were generally Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, the former then free for many men that worked on Saturday mornings, and before long, a Thursday night session using the short-range Morris tubes was established in the supper room at the Shire Hall.

The club's first Smoke Night was held on 26 November, by which time and courtesy of the secretary Lang, reports on the club activities were appearing in the Leader on a regular weekly basis.

"The Rifle Club is quite one of the liveliest organisations in Preston - its bi-weekly practices and matches and picnics and other social fixtures busily engage and keep the general public interested in its doings".

The report on the Smoke Night confirmed all the original office bearers continued, and also identified the captain of the club as now being Mr Edward D. Brock, who directories show on the corner of Tyler street and Plenty Road..

The first Annual Meeting was held on 23 May, 1901 and it was reported the club held a substantial credit balance - no prizes were distributed, but reports suggest the best shot in the club was "Mr. Spratling" 29.

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29 Constable William "Bill" Spratling [page 62]
As an aside, members were encouraged to increase their practice sessions as the prescribed musketry course was due to finish on 30 June, and members not satisfactorily completing the course “will be debarred from receiving free ammunition for 12 months”.

**A New Rifle Range**

The range on the Darebin Creek proved to be a stop-gap measure, and in July, 1901 the Preston club celebrated at the opening of a new range “alongside Preston-Reservoir railway station”.

The same report claimed that the club was one of the first to introduce a device known as the Lang Patent Indicator, which it was supposedly resulted in much faster and more accurate calculation of scores at about a quarter of the price.

From what can be reconstructed, the new range lay parallel with and to the north of Edwardes Street and stretching some 800 yards towards the original lake on a section of land owned by Edward Moulden.

The first distribution of prizes was at another Smoke Night 30, this time on 26 November, 1901.

Sir Rupert Clarke’s trophy, a rifle valued at £2 (a prize he donated to every rifle club) was won by Mr Hubert Wood, a son of the Edwin Wood who provided the background to Preston’s contribution to the militia movement of the 1850s and 60s at the formation meeting of the 1885 club, second prize went to Mr Rouse, third to S. Steers.

A special prize of 100 rounds of ammunition was awarded to Spratling as the first shooter to ever record the “possible” on the club’s new range.

Further evidence of the club’s revitalisation came also in December of 1901 when the Government department in charge of rifle clubs released figures showing a total of 10,684 men qualified as “effectives” in the musketry course during the previous year.

Of these 67 were from Preston, placing the club from what was still a remote village with a population of around 3,800 in the top two or three per cent across the state and top five per cent of the suburban clubs.

As a random sample, other metropolitan clubs - all with a substantially higher population - included Brighton (38), Brunswick (36), Carlton (24), Collingwood (71),Essendon-Flemington (66), Fitzroy (44), Footscray (58), Kew (37), Melbourne (61), Port Melbourne (61), Prahran (37), St. Kilda (40), South Melbourne (88) and South Yarra (27).

Each “effective” earne
d the club five shillings, Preston’s bounty a very useful £16/15/-.

It was also around this time that the Rifle Club began to introduce a Ladies’ Competition as a more-or-less regular part of the weekly routine.

The first appears to have been after a return match of the Club against the Letter Carrier’s Rifle Club on the Melbourne Cup Day holiday in November, 1901.

The Leader noted around 150 competitors and their ladies present:

“So interested in the shooting did the ladies became that a match perforce had to be arranged between them, which resulted in the Preston ladies retrieving the honour of the district unexpectedly lost by their gentlemen friends, who were naturally rather chagrined at the success of the 'weaker sex'.

"With hardly an exception it was the first time the ladies had fired anything but 'glances sweet and tender', and for ones more conversant with the handling of a parasol than a rifle, the general average os shooting was really good, and causes one to speculate as to what might happen should the occasion ever arise to make use of their faculty to shoot straight, which they undoubtedly possess to a marked degree”.

The Preston ladies defeated their counterparts 146 to 138, the outstanding performers Miss M. Steers (her father one of the leaders in the men’s competition) with 21 points, and a Mrs Wilson with 18 points. The report concluded by suggesting that the formation of a ladies’ rifle club was being discussed and “was meeting with general approval”.

**Decline**

The club seems to have been only moderately successful in competition, but earned some early prestige after being granted permission by the Victorian Rifle Association to hold an open day on 27 January, 1902, a national holiday for A.N.A. Day (now celebrated as Australia Day).

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30 “smoke nights” were for pipe smokers, cigars were to expensive for most, cigarettes were yet to reach any level of popularity.
Sadly it was later noted the day did not go ahead due to insufficient entries despite no other shoots being planned (it must be said that the prize money offered was perhaps unattractive - £5 to the winner of the All-Comers competition, seven shots apiece, from a total pool of £10, and £2 for a member’s event for those that had not previously won a prize to this value).

Rather ominously, the usual weekly reports disappeared a couple of weeks later.

The last report on 1 February, 1902 suggested practice would be held as usual at the lake range, but from that point, nothing more was heard.

Perhaps it came as no surprise in early April when *The Argus* regular column on the rifle clubs noted "North Melbourne, South Melbourne and Preston have dropped out".

Whether members continued informally is not known, but one young lad around town could not be blamed for feeling a little aggrieved at the club’s demise.

In the final report appearing in the *Leader*, the club announced it been in conversation with Mr Andrew Hanna, then headmaster of South Preston State School and had offered twelve month’s free tuition in rifle shooting ‘to a student from the higher classes’ to be selected at Hanna’s discretion (South Preston at the time also encompassed the Tyler Street School).

The lucky “winner” was Master R. Robinson, the report suggesting his first attempts had been promising and he “put most of his shots on the target”.

Despite a total disappearance from the newspapers of the day and elimination from competition events, the club does seem to have continued in some form, *The Argus* in May acknowledging the receipt of ten shillings from the club in a fund raising effort to send a Victorian to the Bisley events in England, then regarded as the world championships of shooting.

Although the Boer War did not officially end until 31 May 31, 1902, the Boers were already suing for peace in February and most of the hostilities had ceased.

Many of the clubs around Victoria disappeared, and by mid-year, there were just 19 clubs left in the Victorian Rifle Association.

The Preston club continued with various head to head contests with other clubs, and from the results remaining rarely had any great success until the second half of 1906.

**And Revival**

By this time, 1906, there were 82 clubs associated with the Metropolitan Rifle Association.

Until now, the club rarely competed in the three or four inter-club championships, but in December, 1906, they surprised many by finishing third in a 22 team event held over two Saturdays at Port Melbourne.

*The Argus* rifle correspondent labelled Preston “a much-improved team”, and much of the improvement seems to have come from the arrival in the district of T. J. Witherington, noted as previous with the Lexton club in central Victoria.

Preston managed to hold their form and shocked the shooting world when in January, 1907, the club won the Metropolitan Rifle Association teams championship at Port Melbourne shot over 800 and 900 yards.

Of fourteen teams, Preston tied with Prahran on 290 points but was declared winners after a count back system which placed a higher value on the 900 yard results.

The team consisted of Witherington who finished fourth in the scratch event and equal second in the handicap, J. Creffield (seventh and equal second respectively, the ex-South African War veteran Fred Michel and Spratling.

The individual handicap saw an astonishing 18 shooters with 70 points each; Witherington and Creffield along with two others recorded 33 hits at 900 yards, one behind the winner.

Witherington later in the year represented Victoria in the Commonwealth series of matches in Brisbane and was also elected to the 19-man council of the Metropolitan Rifle Association.

The modern day ideals of Women’s Liberation (perhaps happily for us mere males) certainly was not a concept in the early part of the twentieth century, but by 1906, the Rifle Club had abandoned the principle of twenty years earlier where the man did all the shooting on behalf of the ‘gentler sex’ and a Ladies Club was well and truly underway.
Just how many of the ladies were involved was never quite mentioned, but their competitions were held at the Morris Tube range at the Shire Hall, one report suggesting that five shooters were tied on an equal score (male chauvinism may have come into play here, the score may have been zip-all or maybe 100%), sadly, the regular correspondent to the Leader did not forward details.

Further evidence of the club's revitalisation came also in December when Government department in charge of rifle clubs released figures showing a total of 10,684 men qualified as 'effectives' in the musketry course during the previous year.

Of these 67 were from Preston, placing the club from what was still a remote village with a population of around 3,000 in the top two or three per cent across the state and top five per cent of the suburban clubs.

As a random sample, other metropolitan clubs - all with a substantially higher population including Brighton (38), Brunswick (36), Carlton (24), Collingwood (71), Essendon-Flemington (66), Fitzroy (44), Footscray (58), Kew (37), Melbourne (6), Port Melbourne (61), Prahran (37), St. Kilda (40), South Melbourne (88) and South Yarra (27).

It is known there were neighbouring clubs at Heidelberg, Northcote and Coburg, but these were not listed. The suburban list went down as far as Sandringham with just four 'effectives', suggesting the other local clubs may not have provided basic training.

Each 'effective' earned the club five shillings, Preston's bounty a very useful £16/15/-.

A National Rifle Range

Other notes around the same time show the Preston club captain as Mr. J. P. Howe.

Howe went on to assume a number of positions in the various rifle associations as well as the Preston Shire, and at a public meeting called early in May, 1909 and chaired by the President of the Shire, Cr. Edmund Allchin, he put forward a motion:

"That in the opinion of this meeting it is desirable that a subsidiary national rifle range be established. In view of the extension of the rifle club movement and the adoption of the universal Saturday half-holiday, this meeting affirms that the establishment of such a range is a matter of urgent necessity".

Howe pointed out that the available rifle range accommodation was woefully inadequate and that only 250 of the 3,000 rifle club members in the metropolis could practice at any given time, and that the range at Williamstown was only available when not required by the militia forces.

Not surprisingly, he added that a range at Preston would be eminently suitable for the districts of Richmond, Collingwood, Fitzroy, Northcote and Preston.

The motion was seconded the local Federal M.H.R., Hume Cook and carried unanimously. It was further decided that a deputation should present the proposal to the Minister for Defence.

The deputation, introduced by Cook and including Allchin, Howe and Witherington (now Shire Secretary replacing Charles Stewart), put forward their reasons for the establishment of the range in Preston, a key point of which was the availability at a reasonable price.

The Minister assured the deputation that their cause had his sympathy and that he just the week before he heard a deputation from Sydney expressing the same concerns.

There were no promises forthcoming, other that he would consider the matter in the most sympathetic manner, but that he could not lock into a site and financial matters would need to be considered.

The Preston group's timing was less than perfect - the Minister, Joseph Cook had only been in office a little over a month and in a cobbled-together minority government, nothing came of the move to nationalise the Preston Reservoir range.

The area continued to be use; even as late as 1918, the Northcote Gun Club was still conducting weekly pigeon and starling shooting matches there.

The range appears to have fallen into disuse immediately following the war after Mr Dyer Edwardes formally handed much of the land around the lake to Preston Council and the area to the north of Edwardes street was developed as the Leamington Estate.

The Preston Rifle Club may have been formed in the noble interest of the defence of the nation, but it is unlikely they even managed to get off a shot, even in mock anger, when Preston Reservoir was "attacked" by 260 members of the Sixth Australian Infantry Regiment on Monday, 27 January, the A.N.A. holiday of 1908.

The men, about half of the number that were expected, arrived at Heidelberg on Saturday morning and were involved in manoeuvres which worked their way to South Morang and a night raid (and spirited defence) of the Plenty-bridge, then back south to Preston with the water tanks as the next target.

The warfare was re-introduced in September, 1910 when two armies, "Northland" (volunteers from north of the Dividing Range) and "Southland" "(the rich and populous area south of the range”).

"Those Northlanders are daring people. They had come as far south as the junction of the Darebin Creek and the Plenty-road where they had encamped ... a detached force of the Southland forces consisting of a battery of field artillery, a squadron of Light Horse and two battalions of Infantry were entrained for Preston”.

The great battle extended to Bundoora Hill and across to Greensborough - no "winner" (if there any such thing in a war) was never announced, but we are reliably informed that no animals or innocent civilians were harmed during the filming of the action scenes.

March, 1911 saw a massive blow for the Preston Rifle Club in general when it was announced in the Melbourne press that Witherington had resigned from all his local appointments to take up a contract to lay out a new township at Kyogle in Northern New South Wales, near the Queensland border.

The Argus, significantly in its general news section rather than the regular Rifle Notes column bemoaned Witherington’s departure. "A good shot and a hard worker in the interests of riflemen, he will be a serious loss to the state in general”.

**Meanwhile in Northcote**

After the early flirtation with the Pentridge Volunteer Corps, there was no concerted move to establish either a militia unit of a rifle club in Northcote, those of a military leaning seemingly happy to use the facilities in East Collingwood.

But it was, of course, inevitable that the town would jump on the rifle club band-wagon and a meeting was called by the Mayor Cr. Edwin Bastings 35 the week following the inauguration of the Preston club. 36

Bastings assumed the chair, and was joined by the Majors Courtney (Brunswick) and Pudney (of whom little, aka nothing, is known), and the local doctor and outstanding photographer, Thomas Beckett 37, also a Captain in the Victorian Rifles.

Other than the two invited Majors, The major proponents of the scheme were Beckett, Robert J Whalley 38, the co-proprietor and editor of the Leader, Richard Tobin 39 who had won some fame for the cadet movement at Northcote State school where he had served as headmaster for many years.

Beckett suggested he had been involved with the formation of two or three rifle clubs earlier and added a sobering note to the enthusiastic audience “there is nothing easier in the world to form a rifle club, and nothing more difficult than to keep it alive twelve months later”.

Doubts were raised as to the availability of a suitable range, civic pride rapidly negating a suggestion that the proposed club should merge with Preston and Beckett suggesting a novel solution to the problem by suggesting a short-range could be established in one of the several clay pits around the area.

Cr. George Parsons 40 was elected president, Beckett captain and the names of sixty-five men were registered - perhaps the addition numbers may have deterred the organisers, but Braithwaite’s lead in swearing in the men on the spot was ignored - it ultimately took two more meetings before the new minimum of 40 members was reached.

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36 29 May, 1900, reported *The Leader*, 31 May
40 Cr. George H. Parsons ([http://heritage.darebinlibraries.vic.gov.au/article/13](http://heritage.darebinlibraries.vic.gov.au/article/13)). By an astonishing coincidence, Parsons like his Preston counterpart Braithwaite was also appointed a Justice of the Peace a few days beforehand
Just where the club could practise remained a thorny problem.

There are references to “more enthusiastic” members travelling to the range at Williamstown; hardly ideal given the travelling with up to 1,000 shooters often waiting their turn, but one party did try the Heidelberg range with a somewhat unexpected outcome:-

“... arriving at the ground, they found shooting already forward by the Collingwood and Fitzroy teams. Only a few shots were fired when the marker (Mr. S. B. Graham, the Heidelberg club’s secretary) caused dismay to everyone by staggering out from behind the target and falling as if shot dead. There was a general stampede to where the man lay, and at first it was indeed seem as if he was fatally hit, blood pouring profusely from his head. Dr. Beckett, who accompanied the Northcote team, was fortunately able to give the assurance that the wound was not serious, but of course the shave was close enough to indulge in speculation as to ‘what might have been...’” 41

A number of representatives from the northern suburb clubs - Fitzroy, Collingwood, Northcote, Carlton and Heidelberg - accompanied by Colonel Templeton inspected three sites in late May; the Merri Creek near Northcote Park, the Darebin Creek in Ivanhoe, and the Banyule Estate in Heidelberg and after a meeting at the Old England Hotel in Heidelberg recommended the Banyule site.

The clubs later decided to pool the funds and deputation met with Melville to ask for assistance in developing a range (the Merri Creek site was still under consideration), but had little success, Melville admitting that the growth of the rifle club movement had far exceeded what he had expected and it was never intended that the Government would bear all the costs of the ranges. 42

In the interim, however, the Northcote club had opted for a site on the Darebin Creek, subsequently approved by representative from the Defence Department who suggested “it was better than most of the sites he had inspected”; the exact location was not revealed, but it was said that the line of fire was along the bed of the creek with an embankment of 45 feet behind the target. 43

The site was officially approved by Templeton early in July, but struck a further hurdle when a Mr. A. E. Ford on the Ivanhoe side of the creek vehemently protested and threatened to have the Heidelberg Council involved. It was resolved at this stage that no money should be spent on the site until the matter was settled and the Northcote secretary was instructed to contact the Preston club with a view of a combined effort "to obtain the use of the old range to the west of Reservoir Station".

Ford’s protest may have irked the club, but it gives us a hint as to where the site was - he was listed in Darebin Creek Road, now Livingstone Street on the Ivanhoe side.

By this time, the Northcote club with the assistance of the Council had a Morris-tube range installed within the Town Hall, and this, combined with regular trips to Williamstown became the normal practice, although it is known that by the time of the First World War, there was a mini-range in Roberts Street used for Compulsory Military Training.

THE LEADER’S “WAR CORRESPONDENTS”

Despite the promise of ‘special war correspondents’ when the Leader first noted the acceptance of the first five Preston men, there was actually little coverage of the 1899 - 1902 conflict.

There were a couple of short editorials, the author unknown, the first on 4 November commenting on a severe British setback with the surrender of two battalions of troops, under General White

The other, published on 25 November, 1899 issued a brave challenge to the commonly-held popular and perhaps blindly patriotic view that the highly-trained British forces would quickly wipe out the resistance of a few handfuls of disorganised Boer farmers and that the war may well be over before Australian volunteers arrived in South Africa.

It also suggested that this particular conflict could turn into a style of guerrilla-style combat that had not been seen before:-

41 The Leader, 16 June, 1900
42 The Argus, 19 June, 1900
43 The Leader, 23 June, 1900
“News from the seat of war during the last day or two is not so reassuring. Against odds and with the disadvantages of position, the British troops have again and again triumphed over the enemy in definite engagements, but such reverses have convinced the Boers that they must alter their tactics … their large masses of troops are being split up into numberless detachments and sent foraging and fighting guerrilla-fashion in every direction”.

“This will make them a very awkward enemy to deal with and will prolong the war indefinitely … it may be hoped that the main body of the Boer Army may be forced to a decisive engagement. Some event such as this can alone prevent a protracted, costly and harassing war”.

There was a brief flurry of activity from “the war correspondents” with a couple of letters published on 12 January, 1900, written just after the First Contingent had landed in South Africa on 28 November.

OUR BOYS

LIFE ON BOARD THE MEDIC

ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION AT CAPE TOWN

We are in receipt of the following letter from Charlie Patterson, who along with his four Preston comrades left with the first Victorian Contingent to fight for the flag of old England in South Africa:

2/12/99

“When we Preston boys promised to write to you now and again we did not realise the contract we had taken on, for the chances to write are limited; but we will do our best to keep your readers posted of our movements, though writing is necessarily done under difficulties.

“Of our journey out, you will know all about by now … the sports on board were very successful, including all sorts of events, some of them causing great amusement, for instance, the obstacle race through bags, wind-sails, life-buoys, nets and ropes, combined with the rolling of the ship gave everybody much fun …

“We, the Tasmanians, West Australians and Victorians formed a committee of four from each contingent and got up a concert - I had the honour of being appointed chairman. Our efforts, judged by after remarks were immensely appreciated by the audience, all the officers being present. The Victorian Rifles were represented by Private Hull (of Preston) who sang “Juanita” …

“On landing at Cape Town, we marched and led horses to Maitland Camp on 26/11/99. The New Zealanders, 6th Inniskillings and Royal Horse artillery were there and all the Australians camped with them. The 6th came along with us and helped us pitch camp. We were glad of this as we had been up all the previous night, packing and loading wagons, getting stores from hold, and after a small breakfast, we marched through heat and dust carrying rifles 4 miles to camp, so the assistance relieved us a great deal”.

“We stayed at Maitland until yesterday … all buckles and anything bright were painted khaki colour, and black caps issued instead of red ones. Non-coms stripes and officer’s stars and distinctive marks were taken off … this is because the Boers are picking off the officers …

“The Three Musketeers” (Prowse, Michel and myself) are together in this compartment, all in good health and anxious to push along …

“It is pretty warm and hard to write. I am writing now on a tin of Australian meat which will be for our dinner and tea. In conclusion, Prowse, Michel and your humble scribe send our best wishes for a Merry Xmas and hope by that time the cables may tell you that the V.M.R. are with the party which is to fulfil Sir Redvers Bulver’s promise to be in Pretoria by Christmas Day”.

The same edition also carried a letter from Private Andrew Hendrie, assigned to the Infantry rather than the Mounted Rifles of the “The Three Musketeers” and certainly the opening paragraphs suggest that perhaps Army life may not have been quite as exciting as he envisaged when volunteering.

(The Leader suggested the letter was to his mother. Technically, Amelia Hendrie was his step-mother, his birth-mother Jane (nee Goodie) having died when Andrew was around six years old. His father William remarried in 1885).

“The trip across has been somewhat monotonous - not a bit like what we thought it would be. We have to drill every morning and afternoon. The tucker has not been up to expectations, and the way in which it is served is anything but good. Oh, for a bit of the bread that you make and a piece of cake. I will make up for my loss when I get back.”

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44 The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers were an Irish infantry regiment of the British Army
45 General Sir Redvers Bulver, V.C, Chief of Staff of the British Imperial forces
"I was laid up in the hospital for a while with influenza and while lying in bed I remarked that I would make some of the Boers suffer for it, and I will keep my word. We have not had a scrap of news for three weeks ...

"We had two fire alarms to test the courage of the troops. The first alarm of the bell terrified us for a minute of two, but the discipline was perfect. The troops were formed into boat crews and each man had to go to his allotted boat. We Victorians, being provided with ammunition indulge in shooting practice nearly every days by firing at boxes that are thrown overboard.

"We arrived at Cape Town yesterday (Sunday, 26 Nov). The town is pretty situated at the foot of a mountain. The bay was full of ships and transports, all being in line three or four deep, and I counted as many as fifty. Cape Town is a great place and exceptionally busy at present. Commodious wharfs run in all directions and ships are loading and unloading at railway speed. Wagons and lorries are moving about like ants, all being driven by blacks and half-castes, and railway trains are also much in evidence. There is an electric tram service running through the streets with wire conductors overhead ..."

Hendrie's letter appears to have been written a day or two before Patterson's, but it went on in a similar vein to described the camp at Maitland and the troops from other countries that were already there.

It noted that the New Zealanders had been sent to the front that afternoon.

"There are all sorts of rumours afloat as to what we are going to do. Some say we will be sent to the front on Wednesday next. The rations issued daily comprise about a pound of bread, a pound and a half of meat, a few potatoes, and tea and coffee".

Baptism of Fire

The next batch of letters was published on 13 February, 1900, all penned around the end of the first week in January when the first Victorian volunteers were still in camp.

The opening letter from a Prestonite was not in fact from one that had attracted all the previous attention.

On 18 November, 1899, the Leader contained a brief paragraph revealing that Harold Reed, "the son of Mrs Reed of Plenty Road, South Preston", then residing at Zillmere in Queensland had volunteered and been presented with a gold medal and chain as a parting gift.

STILL ANOTHER PRESTONITE
HE RECEIVES HIS BAPTISM OF FIRE

'Mrs Reed, of South Preston, has just received the following interesting letter from her son, Harold, who it appears went away with the Queensland contingent':-

"Belmont, South Africa, Jan. 8th, 1900.

'Dear Mother - Just a few lines to let you know I am in South Africa. I suppose you are surprised to hear I have gone with the Queensland contingent to the seat of war. We landed at Cape Town of December 14th and I was seasick almost all the way. Cape Town is a town about half the size of Brisbane and about half the population is composed of Kaffirs ... After we had got all the horses shod up, we marched on to Belmont. Having been there a few days, we heard there were Boers camped at a place called Sunnyside and we started at 2 o'clock in the afternoon with the Canadian contingent and marched on to Cook's farm and at 4 in the morning we started again. After we had gone a few miles, we were ordered to dismount and we advanced the rest of the days on foot. While we were dismounting, we heard the roar of the big guns; it sounded just like thunder. It did not take long before we were firing on the Boers- we had been firing about two hours before they gave in and when they put down their rifles we surrounded them with fixed bayonets. We captured forty prisoners altogether, and when we searched the hills we found 12 dead and six wounded Boers. Our side lost two dead and two wounded".

By contrast, the Infantry section of the Victorian contingent was still in Enselin Camp and the same edition of the Leader revealed a somewhat unexpected and certainly unwelcome surprise for Andrew Hendrie, like many of those that had sailed, spending his first Christmas away from family and friends:-.
On Christmas Pudding

SOLDIER’S CHRISTMAS PUDDING
THEY HAVE TO PAY FOR IT!

"Private Hendrie, who still (Jan. 7) writes from Enselin Camp, in a letter to his mother describes what is going on there. He said they were led to expect that the soldiers were to be presented with a Christmas pudding each, but when these luxuries came to hand, they found they had to pay for them - 1s. for 1lb tins and 4s. for 4 lb. tins. Sports were held on New Year’s Day and as prize-takers, the Australians held their own with the Gordons" 46.

"There were also football matches and W.A. had beaten S.A. and Victoria had beaten S.A. ("all right, sport") remarks Private Hendrie. He also tells of a concert which they held on the side of a big kopje, 47 the soldiers sitting down on stones looking down on the performers. The Gordons had some splendid talent and amongst other items gave a splendid Scotch reel, while the Australians did their part to the best of their ability"

A later letter 48 from Charlie Patterson revealed a little more of daily life on the plains and the little luxuries that were available:-

"Up to the present we have not been living badly. We have the usual ratio issued us, but each tent forms a company to buy anything eatable and "hang the expense" for the prices are naturally high. I have paid 2s. for a tin of condensed milk. We buy this extra provision from a canteen that comes along now and again. At present, my tent is reduced to a quarter packet of oatmeal, and till more comes along, we are on rations. We do not economise; while we have it, we live well, for we never know when we may move and we cannot carry stuff with us."

"P.S. The LEADER has always been very acceptable to us. When one of us gets one, it is always handed around and thoroughly read".

It was around this time that defence authorities back in Australia realised that foot soldiers in the open plains of South Africa and with the "hit and run" tactics adopted by the Boers were of little use against mounted opposition. The 125 infantrymen that comprised half of the First Victorian Contingent were the only ones sent from Victoria; other colonies followed a similar pattern.

"The infantry on this side do little. It is all mounted work. Maybe their time will come further along the line - at Bloemfontein and Pretoria". 49

The other letter from Charlie Patterson published on 10 February was also written from Enselin Camp, but revealed (in a fairly long-winded fashion) that the Mounted Rifles had been in action, at least in scouting and patrol duties, although there was no mention of any direct combat in which the Victorians had been in action:-

"... whilst here I was one day sent with a patrol along Zoutpansby road and whilst out we captured 3 horses, 4 mules and a black boy. We also had lunch at a Boer Ostrich farm. From the Orange River, the Australian Regiment moved out to Belmont and the V.M.R. acted as advanced guard, patrols, scouts, &c. I forget to mention that at Orange River we saw a son of General Kronje 50 buried with military honours by the Gordons... patrolling from Belmont one day with four men, we came across two blacks driving an oxen team of four and wagon. We took the whole lot back to camp ...".

"... a couple of days before we arrived, about 200 British were attacked by about 1200 Boers, who were posted over the surrounding kopjes. The Boers severed the telegraph wires on the south side, but neglected the north to Moddar River until too late. The British wired to Moddar for relief (about 18 miles away) and got an answer that relief had started before the wires were cut ... the Gordons came here a few days ago from the front, where the Highland Brigade has such a bad time. They are all seriously sunburned on the legs through lying for six hours in the sun and the kilts not covering them ... camp life here would be fine if we had a few things, viz. Australian bush, water to be depended on, and no dust. I have met quite a number of A.N.A. members here".

46 The Gordon Highlanders was a British Army infantry regiment, formed 1881
47 Afrikaans - a small hill, usually isolated. “A big kopje” is something of a contradiction in terms!
48 The Leader, 3 March, 1900
49 Letter from Charlie Patterson, The Leader, 21 April, 1900
50 General Pieter Arnoldus Cronjé, Boer commander of the western front of the war. Captured 27 February, 1900.
**Rensburg Drift**

Charlie Patterson appears to have been correct when he said that it was difficult to get time to write - the next letters did not appear until 31 May, by which time the Victorian contingent had been in action for the first time around Rensburg Drift, a hotly-disputed railway siding and stores depot.

Twelve Australians, including the First Contingent's Second-Command Major George Eddy were killed in the action between 9 and 12 February, the last day seeing the depot overrun by a Boer force which, depending on the varying reports, outnumbered the Australian and a small detachment of British troops by over ten to one.

The heavily outnumbered forces were forced to abandon the camp, later re-captured in December, 1900. Most of the wounded were taken prisoner before British ambulances could arrive.

**THE PRESTON BOYS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**THEIR RENSBURG EXPERIENCES**

"Writing to his mother from Arundel Camp under dates Feb 2 to 6, Private Hendrie after reporting that he was in good health says:"

"I received your letter at a place called Hobkirks farm, a place that will be memorable to Victorians, as next day, we had to fight for our lives, with the odds of nearly 400 to 1 against us ... we had to go on to a place called Kloof Camp, about 6 miles away. On our way there, we passed Cole's Kop, about 400 ft. high, the highest hill we have yet seen. There were 2 British guns on top and it took 250 men to get them into position. When we passed the Kop, we were for the first time under fire, for we got 15 shells at us. The chaps took it very cool, they would stop and say "Look where this one will go"..."

"On Saturday last very early in the morning we heard firing from the rear and about two hours later 42 of us were ordered to saddle our horses and get ready to go to the aid of the V.M. Rifles, who had been caught surprised ... while we proceeding up the kopje we found the bodies of Sergeant Grant and Private Wilson of the V.M.R. both dead. It seems that were on piquet and were surprised ... at the same time another piquet was surprised as a place called Bastard's Nek and they lost 3 killed, 3 wounded and 3 wounded prisoners ..."

"I have been writing this letter for the last three days, putting a little bit in when I found time. Frank Hull was in the firing line and had a marvellous escape. Freddy Michel is wounded, but all the others are safe. They broke up the contingent when we got to Rensburg and sent us in all directions. In the retirement, I lost almost all my kit - shirt, drawers, towels and blankets all gone, I have only one shirt to my name. We have orders to go out with a day's provisions at 6 o'clock tonight, goodness only knows where..."

In a much shorter letter to his mother and father, Fred Michel also referred to what the Leader called "the exaggerated accounts of the Rensburg affair which he knew were in circulation":

"I suppose they have us all cut up. Well, the truth of the matter is that I am wounded, but very slightly. I am telling you the real truth because I know you would like to know the truth, and I am glad to say that I only got a flesh wound through the calf of the leg - only a little bit of a hole through the muscle. It's no pain at all, but I have to lie in bed and take it easy, but some of the poor fellows there have "copped out" properly, but such is the fortune of war".

Michel's wound was sufficiently serious to see him invalided back to Australia, arriving home 29 July - he was noted as being wounded in an arm and a leg, and like Francis Hull who returned as the same time was suffering from enteric fever.

Given he was by far the most prolific writer of letters, the obvious omission from the batch of 31 May was Charlie Patterson, although the Leader did allude to his part in the action in a brief paragraph of general news:

"Details of the fighting as Rensburg now to hand show that under most trying conditions our men of the Victorian contingent fought as bravely and as chivalrously as could be expected of the best soldiers of the Empire. It is like a romance to read of young Sergeant 'Charlie' Patterson of Preston, having to conduct the retirement from Pink Hill because every officer senior to him had been struck down by Boer bullets".

51 "piquet" = picket
52 Nek = valley or pass between two hills
Most of the descriptions of the action at Rensburg (aka Pink Hill) came via series of letters from those who had been in the action and published in various newspapers some four or five weeks later.

Several confirmed that Patterson was the most senior non-commissioned officer at the time of the withdrawal after five were killed.

It was in fact The Argus that benefited from Patterson’s penmanship, although the account was uncharacteristically brief (most of his letters the Leader filled at least a full column). 53 It also revealed the Charlie was a nephew of the prominent politician and businessman, Sir James Patterson. 54

SERGEANT PATTERTON’S EPITOME

"Sergeant Patterson (nephew of the late Sir James Patterson) was in command of the Victorians after their officers had been rendered hors de combat. He gives the following "breezy" account of the fighting:

"I was in the Hobkirk Farm affair. Boers about 3,000 to 4,000 attacked us. We, on our post, had been there about three days, and were 50 Victorian Rifles, 25 South Australian Mounted Rifles, 25 Victorian Mounted Rifles and about 40 Wilts. 55 We stood for it to help the Wilts out. You will read of our serious losses. It was awful. How I got out, God knows. I was under a shower of bullets - "pom-pom" (Hotchkiss) 56 or 15 a penny we call them - and shell. Not nice. Got all the Wilts we could out and cleared. Plenty of V.C.‘s earned. Poor Major Eddy killed. I was with hi... In fact, I sent him word that our fellows on our left had retired. He rose, ordered the retire; got shot then. Boers swarmed on us and peppered us".

The Leader ventured into a rare field by directly commenting on the Relief of Mafeking in late May and early June, their first edition in the latter month carrying another letter from Charlie Patterson.

(Mafeking was a small British garrison besieged by thousands of Boer troops for eight months before relief finally arrived. The British forces were led by Robert Baden-Powell, later as Lord Baden-Powell the founder of the Boy Scout movement. The recapture of the garrison was hailed by the entire British empire as a long-awaited victory over the Boers).

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

EXCITING TIMES FOR THE PRESTON BOYS 57

'Mr and Mrs Braithwaite have kindly handed us the following letter received from Sergeant Patterson (Mrs Braithwaite’s brother) and dated Hondenhock, May 1:-

"I have to chronicle another hot time that we have had. This was yesterday. With our usual luck, we were outnumbered ... it was not very long before we were in action and secured a ridge and mealie field 58, but presently a large force came and outflanked us with a big gun and pom poms. Our artillery was absolutely useless. We had a pom-pom going, but after keeping them back a while, we got the "retire" and stood to horses, the Boers coming for us, and just as we were mounting, they turned on their pom-poms all they knew ... killing several horses, but fortunately no man was hit. Colonel Price and Captain McLeish carried a man each, and I got one too ...

"Then we rallied on another ridge. The Colonel commanding the show thanked and complimented us on holding the position as long as we did, for he said we saved the brigade, for, had the Boers passed us, the others would have got it badly ...

"We made a reconnaissance a few days ago. Twenty V.M.R. and seventeen Cornwalls. I had the V.M.R., with Capt. Walker of Cornwalls in charge of the lot. I sent Steve Prouse out with others, scouting, and the V.M.R. came along and at a rush into scrub and examined a clonga closely, the Cornwalls cutting wire fences in our rear for us to get out.

"Next day, Steve and I were told to report to Captain Walker and he told us of a big reconnaissance the next day and he was going to give us the post of honour of again scouting for it ... twenty-three of our men have joined the Provincial Mounted Police to patrol the State until settled. They serve for three months.

53 The Argus, 20 March, 1900
55 Duke of Edinburgh’s Wiltshire Regiment
56 A one pounder automatic maxim gun. Manufactured sold by Hotchkiss et Cie, (full name Société Anonyme des Anciens Etablissements Hotchkiss et Cie), established by United States gunsmith Benjamin B. Hotchkiss. By a strange coincidence, William Braithwaite’s second car and the one he used for rallying was manufactured by the same company.
57 The Leader, June 2, 1900
58 South African, Corn or maize field [C19: from Afrikaans milie, from Portuguese milho, from Latin milium millet]
The Wounded

Other than Fred Michel's own reference to having been wounded, there was no reference to other casualties, none of the Colonial governments appearing to have published official lists and it was perhaps a surprise to many when the Leader announced on 28 July the imminent return home of Michel and Frank Hull aboard s.s. Karamaea via Hobart and Launceston.

The same edition carried a report on a Private Inglis 59 "one of the first wounded to return home" being a guest of Colonel Braithwaite: -

"The incident of the one-armed Boer finding Private Inglis wounded and sheltering him for hours from the hot sun with his own body and providing him with fruit is well known ... Private Inglis recalls with relish some of the foraging experiences of himself and his comrades, including Charlie Patterson, Steve Prowse and Freddy Michel. On one occasion they made the Gordon Highlanders fairly stare by riding into camp each with a half-dozen wing-flapped geese strapped to their saddles'.

The report the following week on the almost-mandatory turn-out at the Shire Hall organised by the Preston Rifle Club revealed that as well as the leg wound, Michel had also been shot through the arm; Hull was noted as being the closest to Major Eddy 60 when the latter was shot dead.

Hull had actually survived the incident at Rensburg unscathed, but on withdrawing was kicked in the back by a horse as he was helping a comrade with his saddle. He was hospitalized for seven weeks and attempted to return to light duties, but like Michel contracted enteric fever 61 and was invalided home.

The Troops Return

Both the First Victorian Contingent and the Second Victorian Mounted Rifles arrived back in Melbourne on 4 December after completing their tours of duty.

Although virtually nothing had been mentioned of them in the Leader, the Second Contingent also included a couple of Preston men, Lance Corporal William Prowse, younger brother of Steven (now a Sergeant), and Lance Corporal George Taylor, a currier at Broadhurst’s Tannery in Mary Street.

Of the seven men that had enlisted, only Charlie Patterson was missing, his whereabouts unknown although there is a suggestion he was wounded and invalided to hospital in England.

The men were joined on stage by Colonel Tom Price, Lieutenant Colonel Braithwaite, Major Courtenay, Lieutenant Stewart, Adjutant Patterson and Cr. William Paterson. 62

Of these, Lieutenant Charles Stewart 63 was attached to the Preston Rifle Club and the Victorian Mounted Rifles (and also the Secretary of Preston Shire), Cr. William Paterson was the senior representative of the Shire, Major Courtenay’s background is unknown, but perhaps the most significant representative other than Price was Adjutant William George Patterson.

He was Charlie Patterson’s elder brother (by some 14 years).

Patterson was known as George, but was always shown as "W. G." in advertisements for the real estate company of ‘Patterson and Sons’, then at 35 Collins Street, later in the Olderfleet Buildings still standing in Collins Street between William and King Streets.

The company operated an agency in High Street for a few years in the late 1880s. ‘W.G.’ resigned from the enterprise around 1899 when he became the Permanent Adjutant of the Victorian Mounted Rifles, based at the Victoria Barracks in St. Kilda Road, at the same time living in Coventry Street, South Melbourne.

He served as a Major during the Boer War with Fourth Australian Commonwealth Horse, although this contingent arrived in South Africa when peace negotiations were under way, and was held behind the lines and saw no action before returning.

59 Private Lindsay Morrow Inglis, Victorian Mounted Rifles, wounded at Rensburg and returned 24 May, 1900. He was a farmer from Koonwarra in South Gippsland and noted as a student at Dookie Agricultural College.

60 Major George Albert Eddy, commander of the Infantry in the First Victorian Contingent, and second-in-command overall. He was killed during the Rensburg battle on 12 February, 1900.

61 an acute infectious disease characterized by high fever and intestinal inflammation, spread by food or water contaminated with the bacillus Salmonella typhosa. Closely related to typhoid fever.


63 Appointed Lieutenant of the Victorian Mounted Rifles in 1894.
Despite being 52 years of age, Patterson embarked with the first shipment of troops for the Dardanelles and was repatriated after suffering from stress after being severely concussed during shell fire at Gallipoli. One report suggests he was unconscious for ten days after his mental breakdown.

He died in the Base Hospital, St. Kilda Road, on 19 May of the following year after suffering a stroke attributed to his war injuries. Lt-Col. Braithwaite led the funeral procession from Victoria Barracks to the Melbourne General Cemetery.

An article in *The Argus* also noted the welcome-home "... of six of the seven Preston members who have been on active service in South Africa, four, viz. Sergeant Prowse, Lance Corporal Prowse, Lance Corporal Taylor and Private Hendrie" being entertained at a concert at the Shire Hall, "also Privates Hull and Michael (sic) who had previously returned".

### Wilmansrust

After the return of the majority of the Preston men, there were only fleeting references to the war with the next contribution of note coming from one of the Northcote men that are known to have been accepted, Private George "Dinny" Jewell.

The *Leader* published the letter under the heading of "The Wilmansrust Disaster" after a party of Boers surprised an encampment of the Fifth Victorian Mounted Rifles with the loss of Regimental Surgeon Herbert Palmer of Ballarat and eighteen other Victorian servicemen. 41 were left wounded. Eleven Boers were killed and 14 were believed wounded.

As well as the immediate tragic loss of men, the incident caused a serious breakdown in the relationship between the British and Australian forces.

The British Brigadier General S. B. Beatson in charge of the contingent had apparently been highly impressed by the earlier work of the Victorians, but after Wilmansrust is reported to have angrily stated "the Australians are a damned fat, round-shouldered, useless crowd of wasters ... in my opinion, they are a lot of white-livered curs".

The remarks filtered back to the Victorians and after the column were ordered out another operation on 7 July, a Trooper named James Steele was heard by nearby British officers to say "it will be better for the men to be shot than to go out with a man who called them white-livered curs" and he refused to join the column.

Beatson ordered Steele and two of his companions, troopers Arthur Richards and Herbert Parry, to be arrested; they were given a summary court martial on charges of mutiny and sentenced to death before the British supreme commander Lord Kitchener intervened and commuted the sentences to ten years imprisonment for Steele and one year for each of his companions.

The controversy continued with indignant speeches in the new Federal Parliament as to whether Australians who had volunteered should be treated in this way by British "superiors" and under extreme pressure from local newspapers, it took a petition to King Edward VII and the personal representation of the Australian Prime Minister Edmund Barton and prominent Australians living in England to secure the release of the three Australians from English jails.

A later court of enquiry placed the blame for the surprise attack on the insufficient and incorrect placement of piquets by the British Artillery Major Morris, who was censured and a belated apology by Beatson to the leader of the Victorian contingent, Major W. McKnight, was curtly refused.

Beatson, who *The Argus* referred to as "of unenviable notoriety as Commandant of the Victorian Fifth Regiment" was replaced by General Stephenson in September.

Steele, however, had more problems after he returned to Australia.

In January, 1902, he was charged in Deniliquin Court with assaulting a Senior Constable after Steele prevented the policeman (Hurst) from arresting a man Steele was drinking with.

Steele was subsequently sentenced to six months hard labour for the assault, and another month for obstruction, the sentences to be concurrent:-

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64 The Argus, 19 December, 1900
65 The Argus, 8 October, 1901
The police referred in their evidence to the accused as one who mutinied in South Africa and who was sentenced to death for the breach of discipline; but was afterwards reprieved. The accused said he was still in the military service and intended going back to South Africa with the Federal Contingent.

To "Dinny" Jewell of course, all this was of little consequence and he had his own view of the "Wilmansrust Disaster":

Middleburg Hospital,
June 27 - 01

"Dear Mother - No doubt you will be surprised to see at the top of this letter "Middleburg Hospital". Well, I am here, but when this letter reaches you, I hope to be out after the Boers again. I suppose you have seen in the papers about us getting cut up a bit. Let me explain how I got wounded. We had been having a few "goes" with the Boers, and had started out early on the morning of 12 June the same as usual. We travelled until noon, when we met a lot of Boers. Then we camped and put the pom-poms on them and they "did a get" pretty quickly ...

"Everything went straight till after tea. It was very dark and we thought we had sent all the Boers to right-about, but to our surprise the Boers surrounded us and charged our camp. We had no chance to get our rifles and could not do anything but run or surrender. It did not matter which we did, they shot us down. A lot of our fellows were shot dead in their beds and never knew they had received a bullet.

"I was running for a rifle when a Boer shot at me and I could not dodge him. I saw him raise his gun but he was too quick for me and he shot me in the right chest. The bullet went into my chest and ran up to my shoulder, and then along my shoulder and down my arm ...

"I received a letter from you the day before, but the Boers took it. They also took my leggings, spurs, boots, socks, coat and hat while I was wounded and put them on themselves. They did that to a lot of us, so you can guess they are hard up ...

Jewell went on to add that the Boers shot 181 horses and took the rest.

His account corresponds with others that suggest that after the initial skirmish was over, the Boers, who were almost universally described as poorly clothed and shod, were more interested in looting the camp than taking prisoners.

The diary of a Trooper White held by the Australian War Museum casts doubts over whether it was, in fact, an organized Boer unit or a group of mercenaries "... I might say that half of them that attacked us were not Boers; a lot were Americans, Irish and other nationalities, they could all speak good English" (this appears to have been the incident where Winty Calder suggests that the Boers took only Victorian saddles).

On September 7, 1901, the Leader carried a letter from a new "war correspondent".

Although little is known of his background, Thomas Robertson West was shown on volunteering as a 37 year-old farmer from Preston and he was accepted into the Fifth Mounted Rifles, obviously with an extensive background in the volunteer forces as he was given the rank of Company Sergeant Major (in fact the highest rank of any from Darebin that volunteered) and also was married; the general rules still refusing married men as non-commissioned officers unless they had shown "exceptional ability".

The Leader's introduction to the letter suggested it had been forwarded by a former work-mate of West's, Mr Charles Rule. The rather long letter described earlier actions, but culminated in another version of the "Wilmansrust Disaster":

Middleburg,
22 July, 1901

"Dear Charlie, Guess where I am - in hospital; just my luck; got thrown from my horse, but a rest for a week or two will put me right again ...now let me tell you what happened to us on the 12th ...

"... after having tea, a lot of our lads went to bed early. Our fires were rather late, and big that night, worse luck. The two Sergeants and myself had lain down with a light tarpaulin over us and were reading a skit in Punch, a Corporal Harrison from Fitzroy was with us, when bang and volley, down went 67 horses of my company as the attack was made from our side of the camp. I had made a triangular sangar, but I had the low side towards the Boers ..."
"I got a clout on the shoulder that laid me out for a moment. The Boers never brought the rifle to the shoulder, but kept it at the hip and pumped away at us. It was a very dark night and they had crept into our lines quite unseen by the picquets.

"God knows how they missed me. I had two explosive bullets burst within a foot of my face, and still they kept pumping away. When I jumped up again, four Boers were on my right two paces away shouting and yelling 'Hands up, you ----'. I looked to my front and was confronted by more than twenty of them, all at the mouth of our sangar. I had my rifle knocked out of my hands, and looking down at the barrels of a dozen Mausers pointed at my head, up went my hands, and the next moment, Corporal Harrison fell into my arms, shot through the stomach - he died at dawn.

"Three Boers led me and Harrison into a place of safety, saying at the time, 'Come out of the way, lads, we don't want to see you hurt'.

"The young Boers were the worst. One of them shot our Dr. Palmer though he had his hands up and was calling out 'I am going to attend to the wounded ... the Boers took everything they could lay their hands on. They shot all the fine horses belonging to the pom-poms; shot all the mules they did not want, took all the rations; slung as many rifles as they could over their shoulders; made some of our lads give their boots up; took almost everything I possessed, including a fine pair of field glasses - a great loss to anyone out here ..."

"Two niggers got to the other camp before any of our lads, but General Beatson would not believe them ..."

On Picquet

Although it contained little else of much significance, a letter from Charles Patterson published in the Leader on 3 March, 1900 throws some light on picquet duty:

"Picquet duty here is certainly novel. Around the camp at distances, ranging from 1 to 2½ miles are posts for a picquet to be posted, the object of course to prevent surprises. Picquets are all posted on kopjes. One kopje I named "Dead Man’s Kopje" and it is known as such now. The reason is that there is a dead Boer on it and we found him only partially covered with rocks. At the foot of this kopje there are altogether about 20 people buried, including, so we hear, a woman who was firing there. The tops of the kopjes are strewn with empty ammunition cases, all showing the variety of rifles used by the Boers. We also find exploded shells. When not on sentry or horse picquet, we curl up for a nap. As the place is all rocky, a clean space sometimes cannot be found, so we are often lying with a rock making a dint in the back and with the legs doubled around another rock and stationed right in front of the face. The picquets are generally posted at sunset and are out until daylight. I heard one of the Canadians on outpost challenge an ostrich at night, and getting no reply, shot it ..."

"Soldiers of the King" : A Discordant Voice

To this point, readers would be justified in comparing Northcote and Preston’s South African War to one of the then occasional Australian XI tours of England for the Ashes; all of our good chaps battling a lot of others who, well, were perhaps not British and didn’t always play by the rules of the game.

But late in November came something of a reality check, bowled up by one George Enos Bloxsome at one of the regular and generally insignificant smoke and prize nights organised by the Preston Rifle Club.

Not a lot is known of Bloxsome; he was born at Newbury (between Gisborne and Daylesford), and when he volunteered and was accepted for the Fourth Mounted Rifles, he was shown as a contractor at Dargo in the Victorian high country, but gave his mother, Catherine, in Northcote as next of kin.

A Death Notice in The Argus reveals his father Enos passed away on 21 July, 1900 at 78 years of age and reveals the address as 21 Gooch Street, Thornbury. The notice was appended ‘Gloucestershire papers please copy’, Enos apparently of English-origin.

George Bloxsome served twelve months with the Fourth, returning home in late July, 1901, by which time his mother was at 3 Mary Street, Preston.

As a relatively unknown new arrival in the district, there had been no mention of Bloxsome previously, but it appears that William Braithwaite became aware of his service in South Africa, and in lieu of the usual civic reception at the Shire Hall invited him to be guest of honour at the aforesaid Smoke Night.

Normally the paragraph or two that the Leader would devote to such an occasion would be provided by the club itself, but Bloxsome “stirred the pot” to the extent that it featured in the editorial column.

68 The Argus, 3 August, 1900
69 The Leader, 23 November, 1901
“The majority of people when they get a bit of honour thrust upon them are not anxious to repudiate it, there are a few exceptional cases, however, and one of them came under notice at the Preston Rifle Club’s smoke social on Wednesday evening”.

As Bloxsome took the stage, Braithwaite remarked that he had been a member of the Fifth Contingent and that the club was always pleased to do honour to “those sons of Australia” that had gallantly volunteered their services in South Africa.

This brought the usual cheers from the floor and a small group endeavoured to add to the tribute by striking up “Soldiers of the King”.

“Instead of gratefully acknowledging these well-meant compliments, the recipient of them abruptly stated”:

“There is too much made of ‘Soldiers of the King’. The whole thing was quite a holiday to me and to many others. The little time I was over there I saved more money than I would have working here. I was in far better health than usual, and the climate was lovely. We had a few hard times certainly, but also a lot of good times. The Australians were brave, perhaps, but not more brave than the Yeomanry of England. The only thing about the Australians is that they used to take cover a bit quicker than the other (Laughter).

“Perhaps the members of Paget’s Horse were all swells, mostly wearing eye-glasses and the like, but I have seen them walk into the hottest rifle fire without flinching. You would not see Australians do that. There is too much, as I said before, of this ‘Soldiers of the King’.

The Leader added that (not surprisingly) the gathering was somewhat taken aback by these candid remarks “and hardly knew whether applaud or do the other thing. The president did his best to save the situation by observing that ‘What is serious duty in other countries is just a pastime with Australians’.

Bloxsome’s remarks in the generally conservative Preston area caused quite a stir and it was probably no great shock when the following issue of the Leader contained a fairly length letter from him in Mary Street that may have quelled some flames, but probably ignited just as many others!

In his opening, Bloxsome acknowledged the abruptness of his remarks, blaming them on his lack of experience in public speaking and apologised for omitting the words of thanks that he had originally planned “... if I never spoke them, I felt them, and hope no one at that pleasant social was thin-skinned enough to take umbrage”.

That may have pour some oil over troubled waters, but Bloxsome gave little ground on his original comments on the jingoistic way that the Australian troops were being reported :-

“The impression I wanted to make was this: A good many of them in the squadron I belonged to would never go into the firing line if they could possibly get out of it. Different methods were used to hold back; some would go to the officer’s orderly and look after his baggage; others would take on the cooking; others would try and chum in with the quarter-master and help him with his stores; or else try and get put in charge of the water or ammunition carts. If they failed in all of these, they would then try the sick-horse business and probably achieved greater success through their horse than all the others”.

“As the columns generally moved off at daylight or before, there was not much time to do anything, so when a horse was reported sick, the sergeant just would seldom bother to find out if it was unfit, but would take the trooper’s word for it, but if the horse had nothing wrong with it, it was very easy to untie it and let it wander into some other lines, then report it lost. Of course, then there would be nothing for it but to stay behind and come on with the wagons.

‘Now, as bad as all this might appear, we got to know who was to be depended upon to a certain extent, but not altogether, for on one or two occasions, I had to advance by myself from the horses to the advance guard, and on each occasion I saw a few of our men several hundred yards behind their mates, firing for all their worth and standing a fair chance to shoot some of their comrades in front of them. Fortunately that class was few, and as a rule, would get well behind their cover and stick the points of their rifle well up. One man (I don’t like to mention names, but I could) told us he had the elevation and the bullets would drop on the Boers.”

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70 As reported, The Leader, 26 November, 1901. The Fifth Contingent was in fact still overseas at this time.
"Now, Sir, when a man had had close to fifteen months on the veldt, and has seen men evading their duty as I and other members of the A.I.R. 71 have seen, you get disgusted with some of the 'Soldiers of the King', especially where you see through the papers where some of the returned soldiers have been entertained at half-a-dozen places, knowing at the same time that the same soldiers never fired a shot at the enemy. Those who have not been over there do not know everything that happens on the field, and no doubt consider all who have been and who are still there as brave men, but that is not so and I only wanted to try and change their minds a little ..."

The rest of Bloxsome's letter took a more conciliatory tone, reiterating his appreciation of the rifle club and Braithwaite's kindness as well as acknowledging the performance of both the British and Australian officers of the regiment, concluding

"... the remarks is this letter do not apply to any of the returned soldiers of the 4th Contingent living anywhere near here. They did not belong to my squadron and therefore I can say nothing about them, and I say nothing I cannot prove". Yours &c. C. E. BLOXSOME, Mary Street, Preston, 8-12-01.

Lest anyone think George Bloxsome was being in any way unpatriotic, he enlisted from Western Australia in the First World War, then a 44-year-old farmer, his mother then with him at Bunbury. He was accidentally injured in a train accident and returned with the rank of Lance Corporal as medically unfit in July, 1918 after serving around ten months in France. He died on 9 August, 1945, a brief death notice in Melbourne papers acknowledging his parents as Enos and Catherine Bloxsome, but with no other family mentioned.

The Final Welcome Home

The Fifth Victorian Mounted Rifles returned home via two transports, docking alternatively of the 25 and 26 April, 1902.

Predictably, the Shire of Preston wasted little time and the Leader noted that the Council meeting on 28th was despatched at express speed so the members could entertain the last men to return, Sergeant Major Thomas West and Private Frederick Bartlett.

West in responding to the various toasts referred to Wilmansrust as "a heart-rendering affair", but following what was now the official line that the men had not been to blame, but the outposts had been insufficient (he suggested they consisted of six men and a non-commissioned officer).

It was obvious that the so-called mutiny by the three troopers following the Wilmansrust debacle had left something of a stain over the Fifth Contingent, West somewhat reluctantly adding:—

"As the President 72 had made reference to the stories about the 5th Contingent, he could only say that they had treated them in a humorous way. They were advised at the luncheon 73 to say very little, as there were often reporters present".

The End

The end of the War came also without comment by the Leader.

After two years of conflict, the Saturday, 7 June, 1902 edition carried a half-column wedged between full columns devoted to Northcote Council accepting the re-enactment of the Factories Act and the Coronation Fair of the Preston Presbyterian Church.

News of the declaration came on a Monday morning with the Northcote Council passing a motion at its regular meeting that evening expressing gratification at the declaration of peace, whilst outside the Town Hall, the Northcote Tramway Band turned out in full strength and entertained an enthusiastic crowd until 10 p.m.

At Preston, a mishap prevented the municipal flag from flying at the Shire Hall, but it was noted "many thousand other signals of peace were evidence of the satisfactions felt locally at the good news".

In retrospect, the celebrations may have been somewhat muted as the two municipalities were deep in preparation for the Coronation of King Edward VII originally scheduled for 26 June, but ultimately postponed until 9 August and he suffered a serious bout of appendicitis.

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71 Australian Imperial Regiment - an alternate name for the Fourth Victorian Contingent as it served directly under the British Imperial Forces
72 Cr. A. G. Robertson, President of Preston Shire, 1901-2 (also 1910-11 and 1911-12)
73 Held a t Victoria Barracks
There are discrepancies in the number of men that served in the colonial forces.

“Official Records of the Australian Military Contingents to the War in South Africa 1899-1902” compiled and edited for the Department of Defence by the retired Lieutenant-Colonel P. L. Murray and published in October, 1911 places the figure at 859 officers and 15,604 men, a total of 16,463.

The Australian War Memorial Nominal Roll has 17,280 entries, but this includes an unknown number of men who embarked a second time.

The AWM Honour Roll lists 589 as having died during the conflict, plus another 96 on the Commemorative Roll who served with forces of another country, predominantly British units based in South Africa when the conflict started or those such as the 2nd Scottish Regiment formed during the war.

Based on the total embarkations, the 589 casualties represent a death rate of about 3.5% (the number that served with other countries is unknown; hence no proportion of casualties for the Commemorative Roll can be determined).

126 of the deaths were Victorians - based on a total embarkation figure of 3,592, the casualty rate was again 3.5%, but if the 18 deaths from the 2nd Scottish Regiment are included, the rate increases to 3.7%.

Perhaps as a point for comparison, the casualty rate amongst those that embarked during the Great War was roughly 18.3%, or slightly more than one in every six did not return.

A Final Blast

If George Bloxsome “rattled the cage” during the conflict, it was another Northcote veteran than did the job post-war.

Captain Harold Rudduck served as a Veterinary Captain with the Fifth Mounted Rifles, and at was anticipated to be the few relating of a reminiscences at a meeting of the Heidelberg A.N.A. on 3 July, 1902, Rudduck took his turn at revealing a few unpalatable truths as reported by the Collingwood-based Mercury and Weekly Courier on the 11th:

“On Thursday evening, 3rd inst., Captain Rudduck gave a lecture embodying his experiences as a veterinary surgeon in charge of Australian horses during the South African war. He denounced in scathing terms the appointment of incapable men as remount officers. One of these destroyed 254 horses on the assumption that they had glanders.74 An expert examination did not reveal the slightest indication of that disease. Qualified men were placed in subordinate positions to unqualified men. Horses landed off a ship ought not to be walked more than half a mile to a place where they could be put for a few days. Ignorance of this fact had resulted in an enormous percentage of horses succumbing to laminitis. Out of a shipment of 400 Russian horses, which had been marched out the day after disembarkation, 100 suffered from laminitis. A return he had obtained from an Australian contingent, which had landed with 496 horses; showed that after one month at the front only 50 were left. Laminitis, or inflammation of the tissue under the horn of the hoof, was caused by premature work after a period of idleness. Neglect of the precaution to restore horses’ disused functions gradually had been the cause of the death of thousands of horses in South Africa”.

“The disastrous plan of ordering new arrivals to the front had resulted in the average duration of life of 300,000 remounts being restricted to about six weeks. Worse still, mounting men on such horses had caused much needless loss of human life. The crime of ignorance was no less serious than the heedless disregard of life. As regards food supplies, horses were made oat-sick, and many succumbed to improper dieting. Notwithstanding the enormous amount of sickness through continual feeding on oats, the horses in hospital were not allowed to be turned out to graze, but were given the same diet which had caused their illness. The mortality, as a consequence, was immense.

“Thousands of horses were destroyed through badly fitting saddles, many of which were not only useless, but dangerous. The bits, like the saddles, were raked up from everywhere. Spurs were excessively heavy and clumsy. Great loss of life and an enormous amount of money was uselessly expended because we did not have - (1) A remount department composed of veterinary officers; (2) a thoroughly organised veterinary department, the veterinary officers to have control of horses and selection of feed; (3) a subordinate veterinary department composed of trained assistants”.

74 A contagious, usually fatal disease of horses and other equine species, caused by the bacterium Pseudomonas mallei and symptomized by swollen lymph nodes, nasal discharge, and ulcers of the respiratory tract and skin. The disease is communicable to other mammals, including humans.
THE HONOUR ROLLS

Unveiling of the Tablet

The unveiling of a marble tablet in the Preston Shire Hall on 6 May, 1903 commemorated the names that are known to have served (given Australia was two years away from Federation, the units that went to South Africa where Colonial rather than an “Australian” contingent).

The names as reported by the Leader in covering the ceremony were probably more accurate than those later recorded on the War Memorial outside the Town Hall in 1923, but as always, there were a few spelling errors in names and one unsolved mystery.

There was nothing to suggest exactly what constituted a “Preston” man; an inspection of Sands and MacDougall directories, 1888-1890 does not include entries under Preston for the families of some of the men - they (like the Prowse brothers mentioned) may have hailed from areas to the north, but Preston was the final stop heading northwards for Messrs Sands and Mac.

The Australian War Memorial holds some basic data on embarkations and the men’s fates; there are some hand-written records in National Archives, but not as yet on-line.

F. Bartlett Frederick William Bartlett, Regimental Number 1273, Private, 5th Mounted Rifles Contingent. One of the seventeen children of Samuel Leakey and Annie (nee Cousins) Bartlett. The family ran a large nursery in Spring Street as well as several florist’s shops for many decades. Predictably Bartlett was listed as a 23 year old gardener when he enlisted. He was awarded the Queen’s South Africa Medal and three clasps and returned him in late April, 1902. Frederick Bartlett died 17 February, 1954 at his home in Frankston, 460 Melbourne Road, Frankston. A younger brother, Jonathan (also a florist) served in the Great War, returning wounded in October, 1917.

W. A. Collins Willie Arthur Collins, 1273, Private, 5th Mounted Rifles Contingent, invalided back to Australia, arriving 30 July, 1901. He was listed as a 22 year old stock rider from Preston when he enlisted. He was awarded the Queen’s South Africa medal and 3 clasps. There is no record of a birth in Victoria of a Willie or William Arthur Collins around the time of his supposed arrival and little else is known of him. Like Bartlett, he also returned with the Fifth Contingent in April, 1902.

F. Dau (Killed) Frederick George Dau. Given the number of errors that crept into the preparation of the Great War Memorial in later years the Shire got this spot on! He was born at Wandong, a son of Joachim and Martha (nee Rye) Dau, but he served as Frederick George DOW, 795, Private, 5th Mounted Rifles Contingent and all records including the AWM Honour Roll are under this spelling (whether this was a mistake by officiadm or whether he used this alternative is unknown). He was killed in action at Schueveberg Hoek on 23 August, 1901. His status as a local resident is questionable; records place him as a 20 year old labourer with next of kin still in Wandong, but there was a plaque commemorating his sacrifice unveiled at the Northcote Independent Order of Rechabites hall.

A. Hendrie Andrew Hendrie, Victorian Mounted Infantry (Raglan street, Preston). The family were long-time residents of Preston. Andrew’s brother William Hendrie was a star footballer with Melbourne (previously with Richmond and Preston V.F.A.) between 1910 and 1915, playing 87 games despite being 35 years of age when he first moved to League ranks and missing two seasons while serving in the First World War. A step-brother, Leslie George Hendrie was killed in the later conflict. His father was William Hendrie, his mother Jane (nee Goodie) who died in childbirth in 1882, William later marrying Amelia Young in 1885. The family were still Raglan Street when Leslie enlisted in 1916. Andrew was a 23 year old currier when he enrolled in 1899 - he returned on 4 December, 1900 and died in 1936 at 60 years of age.

F. S. Hull Francis Spencer Hull, shown in records as Frank Hull. 30, Private, 1st Victorian Contingent, Cramer Street, Preston. The 1st Contingent sailed on 28 October, 1899 and Hull was invalided back to Australia per the S.S. Karamea, arriving 29 July, 1900. His parents, James and Amelia (nee Broadhurst) Hull were noted in Cramer Street and James for several years had operated a tannery in conjunction with his brother-in-law Thomas Broadhurst on the corner of High and Gower Streets. Frank Hull was a 21 year old currier with Braithwaite’s tannery when he enlisted.

75 The Leader, 9 May, 1903
76 According to Murray (below). Another source South African War Casualty Roll says killed in action at Kambuladraai 24.8.1901
F. Michell  **Frederick MICHEL.** He was a prominent member of the Preston Rifle Club and one of the volunteers that worked at Braithwaite’s tannery. He was wounded in action at Rensburg on 12 February, 1900 and invalidated to Australia, arriving 29 July per s.s. *Karamea*. Fred was the father of Preston and Fitzroy footballer, Ernie. His parents were Henry and Elizabeth (nee Mitchell). Fred Michel died in 1929 at 59 years.

C. Patterson  **Charles Patterson, 4, Sergeant, 1st Victorian Contingent.** Patterson was a brother-in-law of prominent local politician and military volunteer organiser, Colonel William Braithwaite, the latter married to Patterson’s older sister, Louisa. He worked for Braithwaite in his tannery in Murray Road for some years as a clerk and was 24 years old when he enlisted.

His latter time is service remains a mystery, he was not one of the party that returned to Australia in December, 1900 and the major source of information on Australian Boer War service contains no reference to his fate. He was however awarded the King’s Medal which indicates he served in South Africa, probably with a British unit, in 1902. One alternate source suggests he was invalided back to England; the Leader in the briefest of paragraphs on 21 July, 1900 confirms this, suggesting it followed four weeks of suffering from rheumatism.

Patterson moved to London around 1909, joined the British Army and was killed on 19 January, 1915 in an accident on the Hull docks when supervising the loading of supplies for his regiment about to embark for France. His father, George Patterson lived in Regent Street, Preston.

As well as William George, another brother also served in the Boer War. Eugene Daylesford Patterson (1865) travelled to South Africa on his own account and enlisted in the Roberts Horse and later worked in an Intelligence Unit. He was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, Queen’s South Africa Medal and eight clasps, and the King’s South Africa Medal with two clasps.

S. R. Prowse  **Stephen Robert Prowse, Private, 1st Victorian Contingent.** Prowse embarked as a Private and later was promoted to Lance Corporal, 14 November, 1899, and to Sergeant, 1 May, 1900. No Prowse family is listed in Preston; they appear to have been farmers in the Bundoora district which was not covered by directories ("S. Prouse" was shown in a Health Inspector’s report in July, 1901 as milking 130 cows, the second highest in the Shire). Stephen was 28 years of age when he enlisted, he returned 4 December, 1900 uninjured. There is a strong suggestion that the family were from the Lilydale area, but both brothers were born at Cororooke, a tiny hamlet just north of Colac.

His selection for the contingent seems to have been something of a foregone conclusion. Before volunteering for the South African campaign, Prowse, listed as a Trooper from Bundoora, had been honoured by being as part of a twenty-three-man team selected from over 200 volunteers to represent the Victorian forces at the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee in London in 1897. Although the party was later expanded to 53 after the Orient steamship Company offered free passage, Prowse had the additional privilege of being included in the nine-man Victorian squad that formed part of the Queen’s Escort in the procession.

W. H. Prowse  **William Henry Prowse, 141, Private, 2 Victorian Mounted Rifles.** He was later promoted to Lance Corporal, 18 September, 1900 and returned 4 December, 1902. Rather than Bundoora, he is shown as South Morang and 27 years of age. He is listed in Victorian records as passing away in 1948 at 75 years of age; there is no local record of Steven’s death. A report on a Welcome Home at the Unity Hall in Bundoora held for the brothers on 22 December, 1900 suggests he was known as Harry and places the brothers alternately at Mill Park.

W. Saultry (died)  **William Saultry.** Proved the real mystery of the group - the name shows up as being part of the 5th Victorian Mounted Infantry in the Oz-Boer Database Project, but there is no record of a Saultry according to the AWM. Checking all the Williams in the 5th Mounted reveals his enlistment was mistakenly recorded as SOULTRY.
Armed with this information, we know he served under the regimental number 1489 and died of enteric fever at Charlestown in Natal on 11 January, 1902 and was interred in the War Memorial Newcastle Cemetery, Natal. *The Argus* in reporting his death on 16 January noted his address on the official list was given as Port Melbourne. He was a son of William and Marjorie (McDonald) Saultry and born in Northcote in 1870. There was a family named Saltry (name or initial not shown) listed in Tyler Street, Preston. The only Saultry listed was George in Footscray.

G. Taylor George May Taylor, the only G. Taylor to enlist from Victoria. He was a 22 year old current at Broadhurst's Tannery in Mary Street. Taylor embarked as 244, Private with the First Contingent, later Lance-Corporal from 2 April, 1900 and then invalided back to Australia via the S.S. *Damascus* suffering from enteric fever, arriving 26 August, 1900. He was noted in the *Leader* as being presented with a gold medal prior to his departure. He later re-enlisted as 844, Corporal with the 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles and returned in late April, 1902. There is no record of his birth in Victorian registrations. Queen's Medal and three clasps.

T. R. West Thomas Robertson West, 1161, Company Sergeant Major, 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles. Thomas West was a 37 year old farmer when he enlisted, the oldest of the group and the only one that was married (to Margaret Mack, 1887). He returned to Australia in April, 1902 and died in Kew in 1938 at 76 years of age. Nothing is known of his previous service with the citizen's forces, but he must have had significant experience as married men were only accepted as non-commissioned officers when they were considered of exceptional ability.

There is no official record of West being wounded, but a letter published in *The Argus* suggests that at one stage West's horse was hit by seven bullets and collapsed on top of him “crushing his leg”.

Two other servicemen were eventually identified by the Leader as being originally from Preston although the connection is not evident from surviving histories of the war.

Harold Reed was the son of John Reed, a draper in Plenty Road, South Preston. He was living at Zillmere in Brisbane when he enlisted (Regimental Number 71) with the First Queensland Mounted Infantry, seemingly without his parent’s knowledge. This unit was raised in much the same way as the early Victorian contingents (one difference being that it included a Machine Gun section); i.e. mostly from those already serving with the Citizen’s Forces. The complement of 12 officers and 248 other ranks sailed on 1 November, 1899 and returned on 17 January, 1901. Reed’s enlistment and embarkation did not become obvious to the *Leader* until mid-November when he was quickly adopted as the sixth Prestonite in the ranks.

Frederick Harper Booth was identified in a letter (June 9, 1900) as formerly of Preston. He enlisted at 19 years of age describing himself as a grazier from Harkaway and served as 128, Private, 2nd Victorian Mounted Rifles, embarking 13 January, 1900 and returning 4 December, 1900. There were two or three families of this name in Preston; unfortunately there is no record of Booth’s birth in Victorian records and his family background is unknown. National Archives contain a letter from Booth written from Wahroonga in New South Wales in 1958, claiming he had been awarded the Queen’s Medal with no less than six clasps and querying whether he was also entitled to the King’s Medal - rejected as he had not served in 1902, a prerequisite for the latter award.

It is not clear whether anyone within the Council kept official records of who had volunteered. The list was incomplete, but again, just how many men were omissions is uncertain. Remarkably, all the mentions of servicemen in the *Leader* were of those on the tablet.

*The Argus* on 2 May, 1900 published an astonishing list of volunteers that embarked with the Fourth (Imperial) Contingent, showing each man’s year of birth, name, occupation, town, religion, marital status, height and weight.

The list included two men from Preston who were never mentioned in the *Leader* or officially acknowledged on the plaque or elsewhere.

Alfred Evans 58, Fourth (Imperial) Contingent. He was listed as a 26 year-old drover from Preston, but no family of that name has been traced around the area at that time. Given his occupation as a drover, he may well have boarding in the town, but no alternate district is noted for his next-of-kin. There is little recorded of his time in South Africa, he appears to have arrived back in Melbourne on 12 July, 1901 with the bulk of the regiment. Born in Collingwood, the son of Alfred and Ann Evans (nee Saunders)

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82 *The Leader*, 13 January, 1900
83 *The Argus*, 26 July, 1901
John Hooper 291, Fourth (Imperial) Contingent. Hooper was also 26 years of age and listed as a fireman from South Preston with his next of kin at Port Fairy. In 1900, he could mean those of the shiny helmets and red engines we know today, or one of those that worked on the railways stoking the fires that provided the steam to the engines. He embarked as a Private, was promoted to Lance Corporal and invalided back to Australia on 23 March, 1901, reasons unknown. Directories do not show a Hooper in Preston around that time, but this is not surprising given his next of kin in Port Fairy, he was probably boarding locally. His birth is shown in official Victorian records as being in Belfast, the original name for Port Fairy, and the 1899 Electoral Roll shows his father there as a fisherman. Coincidentally there are four John Hoopers (from about a dozen) shown in the 1903 Electoral Roll in Northcote, but their occupations are listed as brass founder and mould fitter (father and son in Mitchell Street), carpenter and wool classer.

Preston: A Full Roll Call

Research into what remains of enlistment and embarkation records for the South African War reveals another nine men from Preston were involved, one of them serving with a British South African unit and giving his life although this was never reported locally.

ALEXANDER, William John 1261, Trooper, 3rd New South Wales Mounted Rifles. Noted as born at Poverty Bay, New Zealand in 1880 and a farmer, his next of kin was listed as in Preston. There was a family of that name (brother Albert and George) connected with an abattoir in Oakover Road but this was not the connection they already had a brother William, but born in 1857.

EVANS, Edwin The connection was thin. He enlisted from Cunnamulla in Queensland giving a sister, Mrs Hector McKenzie in Hotham Street, South Preston. He does not appear to have been related to fellow Preston volunteer, Alexander Evans.

GAST, Joseph Chandler 347, Private, 6th West Australian Mounted Infantry. He was born in Preston, his younger brother Charles Chandler Gast attended South Preston State School and died of wounds in France on 26 May, 1918 after being awarded the French Croix de Guerre. Gast re-enlisted in World War one and was invalided home wounded in May, 1917. He was still in Western Australia and showed himself as a soldier when he enlisted.

MAILER, James Melrose 416, Private, 3rd Victorian Bushmen. He was listed as 21 year-old groom from North Melbourne when he enlisted and was invalided back to Australia, arriving 9 May, 1901. He was later selected for the Marquis of Tullabardine's 2nd Scottish Regiment and served as 33472. Queen's Medal and five clasps. There was no family of that name listed in Preston around that time although there is a Mr Mailer listed as donating to the local Patriotic Fund; his parents were James and Margaret (nee Shaw) and he is listed being born in Fitzroy in 1879 and dying at St. Kilda in 1954 at 76 years of age.

MATTHEWS, Charles 32, Trooper, 3rd New South Wales Imperial Bushmen. He was shown on volunteering as a 29 year-old drover from Preston. The 3rd NSW Bushmen was formed from country districts, he appears under Albury. The only Matthews listed in Preston was shown only as "J", a hide merchant of the corner of Gilbert Road and Regent Street.

O'DONOGHUE, John 1482, Private, 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles. He was listed as a 21 year-old baker from Preston with his next of kin c-o Tatura Post Office. He was awarded the Queen's Medal and three clasps. There was no family of this name in Preston listed in directories of the time.

PALLISER, George Robert South African Light Horse. Palliser's father William, then in Regent Street, Preston was a Major in the Citizen's Forces and one of the leading lights in the reformation of the Preston Rifle Club in 1900. George Palliser had previously served six years with the British South Africa Police before enlisting with the South Africa Light Horse.

Some of his letters to his father commenting on life in South Africa were published in various newspapers in Broadford and East Gippsland where the family had resided.

He also enlisted as a 44 year-old in World War 1 and returned from Gallipoli wounded in September, 1915. He appears to have lived in England post-war and is believed to have died in the mid-1920s.

Major Palliser at the Preston Rifle Club meeting - "With regard to poor Major Eddy [here the speaker was so overcome that he was forced to resume his seat for a few moments, during which the dead silence was almost painfully impressive] - I was the first man that drilled him, so long ago as '74. When going to see him away to South Africa he came up to me and said I will never forget you, Major, and then reminded me of what I once said to him as boy = "Eddy, you will never make a soldier unless you hold your head up high". He rejoiced to know that Major Eddy had shown the world was stuff he was made from”. (Great applause)

The Leader, 24 March, 1900, following the death in South Africa on 12 February of Major George Eddy, Second-in-Command of the First Victorian Regiment and the first Victorian officer to be killed in the War.
Just when he served in the South African Light Horse is uncertain; the first of the letters published was in October, 1900, but “G. Palliser” is noted amongst Preston Rifle Club notes in August of the same year.

RINGROSE, Thomas 1490, Trooper, Bethune’s Mounted Infantry (British South Africa). He appears to have been living in South Melbourne before sailing to South Africa to enlist, giving his mother Emma in Mary Street, Preston as next of kin. Queen’s Medal and two clasps. He was charged with robbery with violence in a Brisbane Court in May, 1903 and pleaded guilty after producing his discharge certificate. Ringrose was sentenced to five year’s hard labour. He died in 1944 at 79 years of age.

STACEY, Charles Tracey Sergeant, French’s Scouts, Killed In Action at Bethesda , 10 August, 1901.

Last but not least, Preston’s only other known casualty of the war. Stacey was one of those Australians that sailed to South Africa and served with local units, in his case, French’s Scouts.

Neither his demise or enlistment was reported in the Leader, nor was his service acknowledged at a civic level. Death Notices in The Age and The Argus show him as the son of Mrs R. Stacey of Preston and they appear to be the sole reference to his death in the media, although he is recorded on the AWM Commemorative Roll of Australians who died while serving with allied forces. His name is commemorated on the Ballarat War Memorial, but the connection to that district is not known.

He was born in Emerald Hill (from 1884 South Melbourne) in 1874, one of four children of his parents Charles Frederick and Rose Stacey (nee Rodgers). His father was not mentioned in the Death Notice and is believed to have been deceased, although there are references in the sparse military records to his father as “F. W”. This was his Charles’ younger brother Frederick William in Station Street, Preston, immediately adjacent to the railway line, and probably where Rose was living at the time.

A TOMMY’S HANDBILL
TWO GUINEAS FOR KRUGER.

"Mr George Palliser, son of Major Palliser, of Preston, now serving with the South African Light Horse, in a letter to his father, forwards a copy of an amusing handbill got up by the "Tommies" in the Eastern Transvaal and sold at the rate of 11d each, results probably to go to the canteen. The bill declares that a reward of two guineas will be paid to any person giving information likely to lead to the apprehension of ex-President Kruger, ‘who, on or about 21st May, deserted his loving wife and family, and absconded with all the available money in the Transvaal, leaving his wife and family on the parish relief of Lord Roberts and his family. Was last seen making another foolish speech from a cattle truck on the road to Machadodorp”.

"The following is the description given:-Height, about 5ft 1in; age, about 73. Easy to be recognised by his lunacy actions, iron grey birch-broom whiskers, iron-grey hair, turning white since the fall of Ladysmith. Was last seen wearing an old silk hat, a shabby frock coat suit, and always smoking a big cadger pipe: no underclothing, Union Jack socks and brown boots." 84

Another letter appeared in the West Gippsland Gazette 85

Northcote : What The Leader Saw

We’d like to tell you more, but it appears that either the Northcote citizens did nothing to commemorate those that had served, or perhaps the contribution was so small that it wasn’t practical to formally recognise their service.

In a huge three-page spread to celebrate the occasion of the return of the First and Second Contingents, The Argus listed all those that returned via the Harlech Castle, plus those that had been earlier repatriated as wounded or ill, including seven from Preston, but there was no-one from Northcote, Fairfield or Alphington on either list.

Just four men from Northcote were noted in the Leader as serving:-

George Enos Bloxsome we have already discussed; his inclusion under Northcote is perhaps debatable, but as the Defence Department in World War One classified servicemen by the district in which their next of kin resided, this gives Northcote a slight edge over Preston where his widowed mother resided on his return, or Dargo where he appears to have lived and worked when volunteering. Bloxsome also served in the First World War, enlisting as a single 44 year-old farming Bunbury, Western Australia. 86

84 The Broadford Courier and Reedy Creek Times, 26 October, 1900
85 Also West Gippsland Gazette, 29 April, 1902 (http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/68719119)

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38 THE HONOUR ROLLS | The Boer War
His mother was still shown as next of kin, also in Bunbury. The relationship is uncertain, but of five First World War volunteers of this family name, one was Norman Rupert at 7 St. George's Road, Northcote who was recommended in September, 1918 for the Victoria Cross, although the award was downgraded to the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Jewell, George Henry. George “Dinny” Jewell, 1685, 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles. A saddler both in civilian life and while in South Africa, Jewell was wounded at Wilmansrust on 12 June, 1901. He was 25 when he enlisted, embarking aboard S.S. Orient on 15 February, 1901 and was awarded South Africa Medal with three clasps and returned late April, 1902. The 1900 Sands and McDougall directory has his mother Mrs Elizabeth Jewell (nee Tozer) in Bent Street as the only listing in Northcote under that name, suggesting his father may have been deceased. He is believed to have played with the Preston Football Club prior to enrolling and brief note on his embarkation in The Leader suggests he was one of the last accepted for the 5th Mounted Rifles. A brief note in The Argus on 18 May, 1936 on a Veteran Soldier’s Parade at Geelong notes him as past President of the South African Veteran’s Association. George Jewell died in 1945 at 68 years of age.

Bowtell, William George. Bowtell appears to have missed selection at the time of the 5th Mounted Rifles, but was one of 250 who scored a consolation prize after the Victorian Government agreed to a British request to supply men for the Marquis of Tullabardine’s 2nd Scottish Regiment. The men embarked with the 5th Rifles, but served under British command, Bowtell as a Trooper (31547). He was awarded the Queen’s South Africa medal and 3 clasps. He returned to Australia on 25 October, 1901.

Born in 1877, he was a son of David and Mary Anne (nee Davies) Bowtell, living in Christmas Street, Northcote. William George Bowtell died in 1962 at 78 years of age.

McCaskill, H. The Leader on 17 May, 1902 referred to welcome home held at the Peacock Hotel for a Private McCaskill (sic) “who was entertained by the members of the Northcote Tramway Band whose special interest in Mr McCaskell is that he was a member of the old Northcote band”. He was 1667 of the Fifth Mounted Rifles but is shown in all official records only with the initial H. He was listed as being born in 1880 and a saddler from Middle Northcote.

The 1903 Electoral Roll reveals him to be Hugh McCaskill, then listed as a Soldier by trade and at 15 Perry Street, Northcote, seemingly joining the permanent Army after he returned from South Africa in late April, 1902. He was awarded the Queen’s Medal with three clasps. McCaskill was at Wilmansrust and he also placed the blame on Major Morris, claiming he placed three sentries every 100 yards instead of 10 every 30 yards.

“Commander Muller, into whose hands they fell treated them very well, but if the Boers noticed a nice pair of boots, they would take them, but they would pay for them”.

All four of the above were at some point mentioned in the Leader, but like Preston, there was an additional entry noted in The Argus of 2 May, 1900.

John Jeremiah Butler. 430, Fourth (Imperial) Contingent. Butler was 28 years of age, born at Woods Point and listed as a bushman and miner from Northcote when he volunteered. His mother (seemingly widowed) was in Langwells Parade. He was Mentioned in Despatches for gallantry at Wolmaranstad on 6 March, 1901, gazetted London, 9 July, 1901. Butler escaped unscathed and on return to Melbourne in July, 1901, but in June, 1902 while working as a miner in Western Australia, he re-enlisted with the Eight Battalion Australian Light Horse (as 436) which comprised two South Australian squadrons and one each from Western Australia. This sailed on 2 June, 1902, reached Cape Town after the war had ended and returned almost immediately. His Attestation paper on the later enlistment show both his and his mother’s address as the Junction Hotel, Preston.

The only other reference to South African volunteers came with a report on a smoke night held by the Northcote branch of the Australian Native’s Association on 13 December, 1900.

This more or less confirms that there was no representation directly from Northcote in the first two contingents. The night commemorated the return of a number of volunteers including the Prowse brothers and Andrew Hendrie from Preston, but also included the names of “Lieutenant Ahearne, Farrier Carey and Private Ditchburn (Ballarat)”. Of these, Albert Patrick AHERN of Clifton Hill was easily recognisable as a former player and joint secretary of the Northcote Cricket Club. He was a son of Patrick and Elizabeth (nee White) Ahern. A 27 year-old accountant, Ahern enlisted as a Private with the 1st Victorian Mounted Infantry and was promoted through the ranks to Second Lieutenant before being invalided back to Melbourne on 19 March, 1900. He later served in the First World War, enlisting as a 42 year-old masseur, his next-of-kin given as his wife in Ballarat where he died in 1938 at 67 years...
"Farrier Carey" was **Private David John Carey** from Hastings who served as a Private with the 2nd Victorian Mounted Rifles, later as a Farrier Sergeant with 2nd Australian Commonwealth Horse Victorian Contingent, giving his mother Harriet in Hastings as next of kin both times. There was a **Private William Carey** from Hastings who later enlisted in the Fifth Mounted Rifles giving her as his next of kin as in Northcote - the 1900 directory has Mrs Harriet Carey on the western side of Henry Street.

**Ernest Norman Ditchburn** was a 21 year-old student from University of Ballarat (School of Mines). He finished his time with the First Mounted Infantry, later volunteering again and serving with the Second Australian Commonwealth Light Horse. Any connection to Northcote remains unknown.

**Northcote : The Full Muster**

An exhaustive cross-check of a number of source relating to Boer War service reveals that around a dozen other men with identifiable connections to Northcote served in South Africa without ever rating a mention of any kind in the Leader.

**BADE, Alfred** 1319, Private, Commonwealth Army Medical Corps. He was noted as a 25 year-old (born in Geelong) labourer from Northcote when he enlisted in New South Wales but embarked with the Victorian section of the Corps. His sister Annie was given as next of kin and was running a dairy at 261 Bastings Street. Whether he moved north to enlist in the Medical Corps is unknown. The Corps embarked on 18 February, 1902 and returned in early July.

**BICKFORD, Aubrey** 72, Sixth Australian Commonwealth Horse. He enlisted in April, 1902 at 21 years of age giving his occupation as a bush labourer. The Sixth arrived in South Africa after the hostilities had ceased and returned almost immediately. He was living in Auburn, but was born in Northcote, the son of James Bickford who held a number of positions with the early Northcote cricket and football clubs. A brother Nicholas remained in Bayview Terrace in Northcote. His claim of being 21 was untrue; he re-enlisted from Western Australia in the First World War as a Private and had a remarkable series of promotions through the ranks to Captain, but claimed to be 31 when he joined in 1915. Victorian directories list his birth as 1884, meaning he would have been 18 at best in 1902.

**BRADLEY, Charles** 1426, Private, 5 Victorian Mounted Rifles. One of the oldest to be accepted, Bradley was shown as a groom in Thornbury and born in 1857. No next of kin is shown or marital status was shown, the only two entries under the family name at that time were in Eastment and Harold streets, the latter now classified as Thornbury, the occupancy as Mrs Ida Bradley. He was awarded the standard decoration for the 5 VMR, the Queen's South Africa medal and 3 clasps.

**CRAMER, Charles** 169, Private, 6th Australian Commonwealth Horse (Victoria). Enlisted as a 26 year-old driver from Moonee Ponds on 16 April, 1902. Born in Northcote and with next of kin his mother Bridget in Separation Street, Northcote. His father, John, was noted in directories as a watchmaker.

**EUNSON, Donald Wallace** 698, Private, 2nd Commonwealth Horse (Victoria). A 21 year-old horse driver from Brunswick, enlisted 17 January, 1901. Born in Northcote, his father James (then at Gowrie to the north of Coburg) was a well-known real estate agent and partner in Knox and Eunson in North Fitzroy and Northcote and left Eunson Avenue (off St. George's Road) as a legacy of the family name. He also enlisted in the First World War as a Corporal with the Field Artillery giving his wife in Brunswick as next of kin. There is some doubt as to whether David Wallace were his actual given names; there is no record of a birth under David, but there is a Wallace Harrison Eunson shown as born to James and Elizabeth (nee Harrison) in 1882, which matches both enlistments. He died in 1943 at 61 years of age.

**FARLOW, Frederick Charles Edward** Lieutenant, 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles. A 26 year-old clerk, awarded Queen's Medal and three clasps. He was born in Stawell and his parents, George and Catherine (nee Nevan) were in Christmas Street, Northcote.

**HERON, George** 410, Private, 2nd Australian Commonwealth Horse (Victoria). Enlisted 22 January, 1902 as a 21-year old boot maker from 97 Charles Street, Northcote. Born in Clunes, father Hugh as next of kin. Brothers Percy (a well-known Fitzroy footballer) and Hugh junior fought in World War 1; there were eleven children in the family; seven (including George) born in Clunes, the youngest four in Clifton Hill.

**JACKSON, Albert** 1190, Trooper, Steinaecker's Horse Regiment, (South Africa). Born 1881. Listed as a cyanider with his next of kin in Northcote (there were several families of that name, his not clearly identifiable). He joined the South African regiment on 4 December, 1900. Wounded 29 May, 1901. Queen's Medal and one clasp. No definite record of his fate exists; there is a suggestion he may have deserted from the South African unit.
PAYNE, Edwin Ernest Horace 223, Private, 2 Victorian Mounted Rifles. Payne was listed as a 20-year-old carpenter from Thornbury, an area name rarely used at the time. Details of his enlistment are somewhat sketchy, but it appears that after returning with the 2 Rifles, he embarked with a group of other servicemen on board s.s. Harlech Castle in September, 1901 with the intention of serving with the South African forces. The name in official records is Edward, but the signature Edwin. Wm H, Gotch street

RUDDUCK, Harold Sugden Veterinary Captain, 2nd Victorian Mounted Rifles. A veterinary surgeon from Heidelberg, son of Rev. J. S. Rudduck of the Congregationalist Church, Darebin Street, Northcote. Prior to volunteering, he was a resident surgeon at the Melbourne Veterinary Hospital before establishing his own practice at Tattersall's Horse Bazaar in Exhibition Street.

Rudduck served as Chief Veterinary Officer for the Second Mounted Infantry under General Alderson and rather than returning to Australia with the unit in October, 1900, he remained in South Africa and became Officer in Charge of the Veterinary Hospital in Pretoria.

Just when he returned to Australia is uncertain; there are notes that he was released from a London hospital in late April, 1901 and therefore he must have returned by commercial shipping, but just when is unknown. One brief article on his service suggests that he had some 2,000 horses directly under his care. His mother was listed as dying in June, 1900 while Rudduck was serving in South Africa.

He was a regular contributor to both the Collingwood-based Mercury and Weekly Courier and the Evelyn Observer which extended through Heidelberg and the Diamond Valley, but none of his letters ever appeared in the Leader."

LETTERS FROM THE CAPE

"The hollowing despatch has been received from Veterinary Captain Rudduck".-

"3.2.1900 We sighted South Africa this morning and are now running at a good speed. I have had a very trying time with the horses-the influenza affected pretty well every second horse. Two have died and it seems jolly hard luck to lose them when in sight of South Africa …. we had a lively time from the vaccination, our arms were bad; I never saw such remarkable effects before … the waiters on board are all blacks and we call them “Boy” with the exception of the head man, who is called “Butler”. Some of these “Boys” are old enough to be our parents, but it makes no difference. As regards the officers of the boat, one could not meet a finer lot of fellows. The captain is one of the best men I have ever met. When the rush of sickness through vaccination came on, he gave up his own cabin and went into the chart room. The officers of the contingent attend church every Sunday in full dress, including swords. TABLE BAY, Capetown."

Rudduck, by then married, also enlisted for World War 1 in May, 1916 at just on 43 years of age and living in Beaconsfield, although he still appears to have a veterinary practice in Melbourne. His appears to have been a specialised recruitment - he was appointed Captain for the voyage of a horse transport to Egypt leaving Sydney on 11 May and he returned in August with his appointment terminated, but he was re-appointed Captain for second voyage in September before being discharged permanently in December.

RUFFIN, Walter Joseph 13, Private, 5th Queensland Imperial Bushmen. Born in Geelong in 1875, but little else is known other than his next of kin is noted in Northcote; this was George Hall Ruffin, his father in Raleigh Street. He re-enlisted from Brisbane and served with 47 Infantry Battalion in 1916. He was shown as a miner and with his wife in Charters Towers.

STEPHENS, Frank 2374, Private, 4th Australian Commonwealth Horse (Victoria). He was listed as a 28 year-old woodcutter with his address given as 62 Clarke Street, Northcote (directories show the property under Michael J Rourke). He was born in Taradale with his next of kin given as his father in Romsey.

WALLACE, John 31754, Trooper, 2nd Scottish Horse. Wallace was 23 and listed his next of kin in Northcote when was selected as one of the 250 Australians to join the Marquis of Tullabardine's 2nd Scottish Horse Regiment. Awarded Queen's Medal and four clasps. He was born in Benalla and the only Wallace listed in Northcote at the time was Peter in St. George's Grove. Embarked 15 February, 1901, discharged on completion of service, 25 October, 1901, returned 25 November, 1901. Wallace re-enlisted as 2250 in the Fourth Australian Commonwealth Horse, but according to Murray, he jumped ship at Albany and deserted.

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66 Mercury and Weekly Courier (Collingwood), 9 March, 1900
67 "Official Records of the Australian Military Contingents to the War in South Africa 1899-1902" compiled and edited for the Department of Defence by the retired Lieutenant-Colonel P. L. Murray and published in October, 1911.
WICKENS, Arthur  Trooper, 2nd South Australian Mounted Rifles. He was a draper’s assistant living at Glenelg in Adelaide when he enlisted, but was born in Northcote. His father, Arthur senior was a regular player with the Northcote Cricket Club of the time. There were a number of other volunteers of the same name from Adelaide; any relationship is unknown. Arthur was the only child listed in Victorian birth records.

WHITE, Henry  34, Private, 3rd West Australian Bushmen. He was listed as a 34 year-old station hand when he volunteered; for the rest of his history, we refer to the Euroa Advertiser, 14 June, 1901.

“Private Harry White, who recently returned to his home in Northcote on sick leave from South Africa, where he had served 15 months with one of the West Australian contingents, and where he had his ribs broken through several horses being killed around him, and was wounded also by a shot in the shoulder, came by his end in a sad and sudden way last week. A week previously he was chatting away gaily in a local hairdresser’s shop about his adventures at the front. Next day he felt unwell, the following day he was in bed with pneumonia, on Monday he was taken to the Melbourne Hospital, on Tuesday he was dead. His wife and several children are left”.

Nothing was mentioned of White in the Leader and just why the paragraph appeared in the Euroa Advertiser is a mystery (there was no indication of any link to the district).

Murray acknowledges White’s death as being as a result of exposure in South Africa. The “several children” referred to in the Advertiser suggest that White may have been the husband of a woman earlier fined in Northcote in May, 1900 for not sending one of her seven children to school. [page 60]

The final entry under Northcote comes from an In Memoriam column published in the Leader on 3 March, 1900 for Arthur Edwin Coulson.

Whilst not a Northcote resident, Coulson was one of many that had a close association with the district through the All Saint’s Church which served as a place of worship for many citizens to the south of the Merri Creek.

“We regret to say that Mr. Arthur Coulson, so long associated with Northcote and Clifton Hill, succumbed to an attack of enteric fever at the seat of war during last week. Very meagre information has come to hand, but there seems no doubt of the sad result. Mr. Coulson was the eldest son of the well-known Mr. E. Coulson, Spensley street, Clifton Hill. He was associated with his father in the firm of Coulson and Hay, provision merchants, of Flinders Street, and on the foundation of the first Victorian contingent volunteered for the Cape. He was 23 years of age, and was fond of athletic exercises. Although not of large physical development, his friends say that he was quite robust and wiry, which effectually dispenses a rumour that has gained much credence to the opposite effect. He was quiet in his habits and became a member of the Mounted Rifles about 18 months ago. He was a leading spirit, also, in the All Saints’ cricket club. By his friends and comrades he was warmly liked. Mr. Coulson’s death has cast a gloom over the All Saints’ church congregation, and indeed, over the whole neighbourhood. His own wish had been to have fallen in battle rather than in hospital; a true soldier’s aspiration. Universal sympathy, from the Lieutenant-Governor downward; has been expressed for Mr. Coulson’s bereaved family”.

Number 71, Private Arthur Edward Coulson died of enteric fever at De Aar, South Africa on 24 February, 1900. His death was mentioned in a letter from Charlie Patterson to the Leader published on 21 April, 1900. Although it is by no means certain, it appears that Coulson Reserve on Heidelberg Road just to the north-east of Clifton Hill station was named in his honour.

No civic memorial to those that served was ever erected in Northcote, but the sacrifice of Frederick Dau was commemorated with the unveiling of a memorial tablet at the Northcote Rechabite Hall in Westbourne Grove on 16 April, 1902.88

The ceremony was attended by most of the local dignitaries, but also included Colonel (later Major General Sir John, K.C.M.G.) Hoad, D.S.O. and Mrs Hoad. Hoad had been the Commanding Officer of the First Victorian Contingent.

Sadly, other than the usual platitudes of King and Country, the report on the unveiling revealed absolutely nothing of Frederick Dau himself. There is a belief that the tablet was later transferred to the Northcote Town Hall; its whereabouts (or indeed existence) today unknown.

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88 The Leader, 19 April, 1902
Heidelbergshire

Although Fairfield and Alphington were then Ridings of the Shire of Heidelberg, we have included the half-dozen or so from these districts that are known to have served in the South African War to keep the alignment with today's Darebin boundaries and the material researched for the First World War.

BLISS, Frederick 210, Private, 6th Australian Commonwealth Horse (Victoria). Enlisted 26 April, 1902 as a 22 year-old farm labourer from Rushworth, but with his father Theodore in Grange Road, Alphington as next of kin. He again volunteered for World War 1 using his full name of Frederick Roden Bliss, then married and living in Coburg. Bliss served as an Air Mechanic with the Australian Flying Corps and returned in May, 1919.

HEHIR, Timothy Edward 2311, Private, 4th Australian Commonwealth Horse (Victoria). Enlisted 11 February, 1902 as a labourer with his father Patrick listed as next of kin. The only Patrick listed around that time was a grocer in Brighton Street, Richmond, but he may have lived in Fairfield.

KIMPTON, Austin George

He enlisted in Durban and served around 16 months with the Canadian Rifles. Austin Kimpton also enlisted in the First World War at around 37 years of age and died of wounds in France on 9 August, 1918. He was a brother of Henry Edgar and Stephen William below—the family was one of the first to settle in Fairfield with their parents Thomas Robinson and Ann Eleanor (nee Anderson) grocers in Heidelberg Road. A report in the Collingwood-based Mercury (22 September, 1899) on the death of his father Thomas reveals that there were eight sons and five daughters in the family, Thomas Kimptom migrating from England to Australia around 1850.

KIMPTON, Henry Edgar 1359, Private, New South Wales Army Corps. He is shown in the few records that remain as KEMPTON, but this should be KIMPTON. He was a brother of Austin and Stephen. He was a 26 year old clerk and noted as living in Perth.

KIMPTON, Stephen William 1854, 3rd Australian Commonwealth Horse (Queensland). He enlisted in Brisbane, 4 February, 1902 as a 27 year-old labourer. No residential address was given, his next of kin was “Mrs M A Kimpton, Melbourne” (May Eleanor).

ROUSE, William George 3656, 6th New Zealand Contingent. Rouse was born in Fitzroy in 1881 and served with the New Zealand forces initially as a Farrier Sergeant, later promoted to Quarter-Master Sergeant. His father was John in Rathmines Street, Fairfield. Rouse was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for an action in which he captured twelve armed Boers. There was a Rouse noted at various times in 1900 in connection with the re-formed Preston Rifle Club, but no initial was ever given.

THURGOOD, Alfred George 993, Private, 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles. Born 1876, he enlisted as a drover from Maffra with his next of kin in Fairfield. He was a son of Albert J. Thurgood, noted in Park Crescent. The name of A. Thurgood appears in a few reports of officials and players of Fairfield Cricket Club—heither father, son or both is unclear. He was later promoted to Corporal and awarded the Queen’s Medal with three clasps. Thurgood died in 1945 at 70 years of age.

WEEDING, Herbert 938, Private, 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles. He was 22 and farming at Werribee when he enlisted. His next of kin was given as Joseph H. Weeding in Station Street, Fairfield. Herbert Weeding was invalided wounded back to Australia, arriving 29 January, 1902 and awarded the Queen’s Medal and three clasps. Weeding also served with the Naval and Military Forces to the north of Australia during the First World War when he was married and living in Richmond. He was repatriated back to Australia late in 1915 suffering from malaria and died at 42 years of age in the Caulfield Military Hospital from the effect of the disease in June, 1922. His death left his widow Mabel with three children aged between 5 and 20.

AND IN THE GREAT WAR

Those That Served

The Great War broke out just three months before the fifteenth anniversary of the commencement of the Boer War and the Darebin district had grown considerably, especially in Northcote which grew from a population of 8080 in 1899 to 21,167 in 1914, Preston rather less so from 3012 to 6,200.

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89 The title used at the time, as, of course, no-one believed another war on such a scale was possible.
90 Figures taken from 1899 and 1914 Municipal Directories; the 1901 Federal Census had Northcote’s, population as 9,677, the Directory, 9,193
From approximately sixty men with close connections to the district that sailed for South Africa, there appears to have been just nine that re-enlisted for the second major conflict in which Australians were involved - Albert Ahern, Frederick Bliss, George Bloxsome, Donald Eunson, Joseph Gast, Austin Kimpton, George Palliser, George Patterson, Harold Rudduck; Walter Ruffin and Herbert Weeding - although we should add here that could have been one of two others; exact matching is difficult in some cases because many Boer War records do not disclose a second given name or initial.

Gast, Kimpton, Patterson and Weeding died during or as a result of the conflict, but extensive research in the background of around 3,000 local men that enlisted for the Great War reveals a significant number that served both in South Africa and some fifteen of more years later in the Middle East and on the Western Front (two of those listed below, Abraham Austin and Walter Alexander Pollock actually served yet again during the Second World War in non-combat roles, both eventually discharged in their late 50s).

Perhaps as an indication of the demographic growth of the area; several of those that served a second time were veterans of British or South African units, others volunteered from other parts of Melbourne; all, of course, were 35 years or older and many had married after being accepted as single men for the South African contingents,

Those marked with an asterisk gave their lives during or immediately after the war of 1914-18, fuller details of their background are in our Darebin's Great War In Memoriam volumes.

Preston

ALEXANDER, William James Alexander was born in N.S.W. and served as 31534, Trooper with the 2nd Scottish Horse (made up of Victorians) in South Africa. In October, 1914, he enlisted for the Great War, giving his address as Queen Street, Regent. He served in the 4 Camel Transport Corps in the Middle East, initially as a Private, but with the rank of Warrant Officer Class II when he returned to Australia in December, 1916 after completing four years’ service. He appears to have been married after returning and died in Sydney Hospital on 3 June, 1924, the cause apparently not related to his military service.

CAPPER, Frederick William Volunteered for South Africa from Richmond and served as 1690, Saddler, with the Fifth Victorian Mounted Rifles, and in December, 1901 listed as dangerously ill. In July, 1915, he enlisted at 37 years of age while living with his wife and family at ‘Brooklyn’, Jessie Street, Preston. Capper embarked as a Private with the 22 Infantry, but was promoted to Quartermaster Sergeant before returning to Australia in October, 1916 suffering from the effects of shell shock. He died in Preston, 1955.

FREDERICK, William Cecil Sydney 33474, Trooper, 2nd Scottish Light Horse. His WW1 attestation suggests he also spent 3 months with the Natal Field Artillery and 12 months with the Australian Field Artillery, the latter unit part of the volunteer forces. He enlisted in October, 1917 while living with his mother at 16 Jeffrey Street, Preston and served with the Australian Army Pay Corps. He returned in May, 1919 and is noted as having died on 17 October, 1950.

GEDDES, Thomas Volunteered for South African service from North Fitzroy and served 208 days as 452, Private, 2 Australian Commonwealth Horse (Victoria). He was married and living at 16 Percival Street, Preston when he enlisted in September, 1915. Geddes served initially with 1 Australian Remount Unit and returned to Australia in October, 1916 after the unit was disbanded. A hospital attendant in civilian life, he re-enlisted in May, 1918 while living at Wandin and served until September, 1919 with the Medical Corps attached to the Naval and Military Expeditionary Force based in the islands to the north of Australia. Died in Preston, 1960 at 84 years.

HOWARD, George Howard was born in Auckland and living with his mother in Brunswick when he was accepted as 31627, Trooper as part of the 2nd Scottish Horse Regiment. He was shown as a 40-year-old cook when he enlisted in February, 1915, then with his mother at 68 Cramer Street, Preston. He served as 558, Private with the 23 Infantry before returning to Australia with chronic rheumatism in April, 1917. He is noted as dying on 26 June, 1947.

LONG, James * His World War One Attestation suggests he spent 12 years in the British Army before migrating to Australia with his young family in 1912. His unit is not disclosed in the various Boer War databases, the best fit maybe 32665, 7 Battalion Infantry Yeomen. The family were at 84 Bell Street, Preston when he enlisted in January, 1916. Long served as a Private with 4 Infantry Battalion before being killed at Bullecourt, France on 11 April, 1917. He was 43 years of age and left a widow and four children aged 16 and under.

WILSON, Peter Henry Wilson was born in Port Pirie and served as 424, Trooper with the 5th South Australian Bushmen and later with a Remount unit of the South African permanent forces. He was living with his wife at 19 Warrs Avenue, South Preston when he enlisted in February, 1917. He served as 3537 with 4 Light Horse Regiment in Egypt before returning to Australia in April, 1919. Died in Heidelberg, 1965 at 78 years.
WRIGHT. Osbert  Born in Warwickshire, England, Wright claimed on Attestation to have served three years in the Imperial Army, including 10 months in South Africa with 63 Royal Field Artillery, although none of the databases confirm this (perhaps through a corruption of his unusual first name). The date of his move to Australia is not known; he was a 36 year-old painter and decorator, married and in Queen Street, Preston when he enlisted in August, 1917. Wright served as a Private with 37 Battalion before embarking for return to Australia just a few days before the Armistice suffering from chronic rheumatism. A son Kenneth served in the Second World War. Died, Surrey Hills, 1950 at 68 years.

Northcote

AUSTIN, Abraham  One of the pair that managed to serve in South Africa as well as both World Wars. He volunteered as a farrier from Yarragon and served as a Shoeing Smith, 104, with 6 Australian Commonwealth Horse which returned without seeing combat. In September, 1915, Austin enlisted from 4 Ethel Street, Thornbury and served as a Corporal with the Australian Army Ordnance Corps before returning in February, 1919. He was married and in Whittlesea when he enlisted again in April, 1941 (at 54 years of age) and served as a Corporal in the 3rd Military District Workshops before being discharged in May, 1943. Austin died in Kilmore in 1959, 79 years of age.

BAILEY, George Alfred  served in the Boer War, firstly as a Trooper with the New South Wales Bushman Contingent and later with the 1st Commonwealth Victoria Regiment. Post-war he appears to have for a time been a regular soldier, claiming five years in the 6th Australian Infantry Regiment.

He was living with his wife Nora at 6 Mitchell Street, Northcote when he enlisted in May, 1915, but a Statutory Declaration from a Sarah Kilby Bailey of Yarraville revealed that she was his lawful wife, having married him on 14 August 1901; he subsequently having entered into a bigamous marriage with Nora.

Despite a fine military record where he was promoted through the ranks to Lieutenant, Bailey was found guilty by a General Court Martial in September, 1919 of being absent without Leave while awaiting his return to Australia. He was sentenced to loss of seniority and precedence and his appointment as Lieutenant was cancelled; Bailey was also deemed not eligible for War Medals, this decision overturned on appeal on 20 June 1923. Died at Mirboo North 1955 at 73 years.

BARKER, Harry Huntley  Barker's South African record is a little unclear. He was born in Collingwood and appears to have travelled on his own initiative to serve as 1724, Trooper, Steinaecker's Horse between April and September, 1902. On Attestation, he claimed two years' service in South Africa, the other period believed to have been between April, 1901 and April, 1902 with Damant's Light Horse.

When he enlisted in on 19 August, 1914 (the first day recruiting offices were open), Barker was a 37 year-old sailor, married and living at 2 Kemp Street, Croxton. He served as 2174, Corporal with 3 Field Artillery Battery and reached the rank of Battalion Quarter Master Sergeant before returning wounded in December, 1917. He is listed as having died in October, 1939.

DALEY, Claude Henry  * 397, Duke of Edinburgh's Own Volunteer Rifles. Daley was born in South Australia and was one of those that served with a British regiment, seemingly after paying his own way to South Africa, He was living with a married sister at 13 Dally Street, Northcote when enlisted in July, 1917. He was killed in action from Melbourne, France on 19 July, 1916, then 35 years of age.

DWYER, Andrew James  The Dwyer family had a remarkable record of service to Australia. Andrew served in South Africa as 631, Bugler, Third Victorian Bushmen and was listed as from Carlton. He was in Bay View Street, Northcote when he enlisted in February, 1915 with the rank of Captain, alter promoted to Major. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (second only to the Victoria Cross) in January, 1917 and was later recommended for a Companion to the D.S.O. Died in East Melbourne, 1945 at 64 years.

A brother, Lieutenant Albert Valentine Dwyer was in Bartlett Street, Preston before being killed in action at Gallipoli in December, 1915. He was the incumbent President of the United Naval and Military Association of Victoria before volunteering. A report on his death in the Leader revealed that another brother Walter had also enlisted and that a fourth brother, Hector also wanted to volunteer, but was dissuaded only when the brothers thought one should remain at home and drew lots for who would miss out!

Their father, retired Lieutenant William M. Dwyer was the founder of the Senior Cadet movement in Victoria and just before Albert's death was noted as having served for 46 years after joining the Volunteer Artillery as a 12 year-old trumpeter in 1863. The report concluded that the family had 106 years of service in various military forces. Andrew Dwyer died in East Melbourne in 1945 at 64 years of age.
DYSON, Richard Parkinson * Dyson had a varied life, born in Lancashire and returning to England where he served with Kitchener’s Light Horse Regiment in the Boer War, firstly as a Lance Corporal and later Sergeant before joining the Australian Navy as a signalman (noted “very good discharge produced”), and also earning certification as a diver with the Harbor Trust. He enlisted for the Great War in January, 1916 while living with his wife and family at 35 Smith Street, Thornbury and was killed in action at Proyart, France on 10 August, 1916, aged 41 years.

ELLIOTT, Harold Edward * 91 One of Australia’s highest ranking and most decorated soldiers of the Great War, Elliott volunteered in 1900 while living in Ballarat and studying law at Melbourne University. He served as 121, Private (later Corporal) with 4 Victorian Imperial Bushmen and was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. After completing his tour with the Bushmen, he returned to South Africa and served as Lieutenant with Cape Colony Cyclists Corps. Elliott was living with his wife at 73 Darebin Street, Northcote, when war broke out.

GARTSIDE, Robert * One of the most senior officers in terms of both age and rank, Robert Gartside was living at 88 Cunningham Street, Westgarth and a Lieutenant-Colonel with 7 Infantry before being killed in action at Cape Helles on 8 May, 1915 at 52 years of age. He was noted at the time as having joined 4th Battalion (Volunteers) in 1885 and had an unbroken 30 years in service. Gartside was at Harcourt where he had an orchard before volunteering and serving in South Africa as a Lieutenant, Third Victorian Bushmen. He was severely wounded at WolveKuil in February, 1901 and invalided to Australia, arriving home in May. Pictured right.

O’LEYAR, John Patrick * O’Leary served with the South African Mounted Police during the Boer War. His connection to Darebin when he enlisted at 45 years on 17 October, 1916 for service in the Great War is a little unclear, but his next of kin was eventually established as a Mrs Maria Clam at 73 Charles Street, Northcote. O’Leary died of pneumonia in a Military Hospital in England on 27 February, 1917.

POLLOCK, Walter Alexander Pollock was another that served with an overseas unit, in his case as 2255, Trooper with South African Light Horse. He was shown as having been born in Talbot, Victoria, but his residential address was not shown. Pollock enlisted in October, 1914 from South Australia and served as Private 323 with the 9th Light Horse, with his mother next of kin in Normandy Avenue, Thornbury.

In a remarkable career, Pollock also enlisted twice during the Second World War; firstly in April, 1940 at when he served as a Private, V83391, for four months at Dhurringile Garrison before being discharged in July, and again in April, 1942 serving as Private until May, 1943 with the 17 Garrison Battalion before being finally discharged just a few months short of his 60th birthday! He died at Talbot in 1954, then 75 years of age.

TAIT, John Johnstone served in South Africa as 31745, Quarter Master Sergeant of the 2nd Scottish Horse Regiment, listing his father at Heywood, Victoria as next of kin. After his time expired, he joined the South African Light Horse and served in the 1906 Zulu Rebellion with the Zululand Mounted Rifles until 1908. A brother Norman served with him in the 2 Scottish and remained in South Africa where he died at Port Elizabeth in 1927; the pair were both born in Scotland and are believed to migrated about 1880

On enlisting in the Great War, John was given the rank of Second Lieutenant as he claimed 22 years of military service. He was married, 37 years of age and and listed as a farmer, living at the corner of Brook and Derby Streets, Northcote when he enlisted in October, 1914. Tait returned to Australia in April, 1916 after being wounded at Gallipoli, but he managed to serve another two periods, one as Adjutant with the Sea Transport Staff aboard HMAS Afric until December, 1917 and again with a Special Services Militia Reserve. He died at Mallacoota in 1942 at 65 years.

Heidelbergshire

PETTIT, Alfred * He was born in England and the family emigrated when he was just three years old. Pettit served as 337, Second Victorian Mounted Rifles, living in Fitzroy and as a printer with the Government Printing Office. Pettit was single and living with a married sister in Station Street, Fairfield when he enlisted in January, 1916 He served as a Private with the 37 Infantry before he died of wounds on 26 May, 1917 at Boulogne, France aged 41 years.

A brother, George was one of a small number of men who embarked twice for South Africa. He was in Morwell and a 22 year-old farmer when he volunteered and served as 337, Trooper, Second Victorian Mounted Rifle. He was invalided home in August, 1900 and later re-embarked 929, Private, with the Fifth Victorian Mounted Rifles. He does not appear to have served in the Great War, but a son, Ronald Frederick, born in Northcote in 1923, enlisted as VX139870 in the Second World War while residing in New Guinea.

SUMPTER, Henry * Born in Northampton, England, Sumpter served with the 4th Battalion, Northants Infantry Regiment in South Africa before migrating to Australia in 1911 at 29 years of age. He married locally and was in Perry Street, Alphington when he enlisted in February, 1916. Sumpter was killed in action at Bourses, France on 11 July, 1918 while serving as a Private with the 6th Infantry. Pictured right.

THOMPSON, Frank Woodfield Dixon * Thompson’s Great War Attestation suggested that he had spent a year with the Capetown Highlanders during the Boer War. His connection to Darebin is a little unclear - he served with the militia forces in Perth and listed his mother as next of kin and living there, but she is later shown in Fitzroy and Thompson appears to have been living with an elder brother in Lucerne Crescent in Alphington. He enlisted of the first day offices were open and served as a Lance Corporal with 7 Infantry Battalion before being killed in action at Gallipoli on 12 August, 1915.

Survivors of 1958

One of the most interesting documents on which the OZ-Boer War Project is based is a 1958 list of Victorian financial members of the South African Soldiers’ Association of Victoria supplied to the co-coordinator, Colin Roe by Carol Wittingslow.

Obviously with a gap of 61 years since hostilities commences, each of the 273 surviving members listed would have been a minimum of 80 years of age and the ravages of time are evident with a large number known to have passed away in the five years after the list was compiled.

The list was open to all that served in pro-British forces and includes many men from British or South African units that later migrated to Australia as well as Australians that paid their own way to South Africa to enlist. For some of these, details of their military service at the time are sketchy and in many cases, only initials are shown, but our part of the project has been to match names back to the directories of the time to determine full names - a frustrating exercise as many several addresses cannot be matched and some of those that are again just show initials!

Preston

COOK, William Henry 1105, Private, 5 Victorian Mounted Rifles. Born 1875, enlisted as a farmer from Darlimurla near Thorpedale. He was shown at 10 Tasman Street, West Preston in 1958, but later correspondence suggests either he or a close relative was in Thornbury when enquiries were made regarding replacement of his service medals. He was awarded five clasps, suggesting he may have served with a South African unit as well as the VMR. Cook died in Preston, 1975 at 98 years of age, the eldest of any individual in our group.

FRY, George Edward Noted as having served as 4575, Private, with the Gloucestershire Regiment and having been posted as Missing in the very earliest days of the conflict. He was actually captured by the Boers and released at Ladysmith on 30 October, 1899. The 1958 list has him at 237 Tyler Street, he died two years later in Preston at 85 years of age.

McDONALD, James Served as 4744, Private with the 8 King’s Royal Irish Hussars. He was at 96 Tyler street, Preston in 1958 and died there the following year at 80 years of age.

RAYBOULD, Arthur John Boulton Served as 2904, Squadron Sergeant Major with the British 1st Royal Dragoon Guards. The rank suggests he had some years of military background before he went to South Africa, He was at 74 Southernhay Street, Reservoir in 1958 and died in Fitzroy in 1960 at 92 years of age.

TRIGGER, Francis Henry 1526, Private, 5 Victorian Mounted Rifles. Born in 1879, he was a station hand on what appears to have been the family farm at Heywood. He was promoted to Corporal before returning to Australia. He was shown in the membership list as living at 17 Park Street, West Preston and was noted in 1915 as being in Mt. Gambier. Trigger died in Coburg in 1963, aged 85 years.
Northcote

BEECHER, George Andrew  557, Private, 3rd Victorian Bushmen. A 21 year-old farm hand from Stratford, shown at 57 Clarendon Street, Thornbury in the 1958 membership lists. He died in Fitzroy in 1966 at 87 years of age.

GRASSHAM, Thomas Charles  He is a somewhat confusing case. He enlisted for the Great War, born in Manchester, England in 1881 but with next of kin in Melbourne and on his Attestation claimed to have served two years and 3 months with the 3rd New South Wales Bushmen, but the attestation roll for this unit has the only GRASSHAM as 308, James. As a motor driver in civilian life, Grassham served as a Corporal with 9 Australian Service Corps from December, 1914 until he returned wounded in February, 1917. He also enlisted as V85307 during the Second World War and served in staff role until discharged three months later. The 1958 list has him at 40 Fyffe Street, Thornbury, but later correspondence has him in Reservoir and 84 years old in 1965. He died in the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital in 1972 at 89 years of age.

HALFORD, John Henry  Another mystery. He is shown on the membership list as belonging to 2 Victorian Mounted Rifles, but there is no embarkation in any of the colonial Contingents under this family name. He was shown at 24 Herbert Street, Northcote and died in Melbourne, 1963 at 83 years of age.

HEARNDEN, Edward Walter  2291, Private, 4 Australian Commonwealth Horse (Victoria). Volunteered as a 21 year-old boot maker from Carlton. Listed at 26 Hutton Street, Northcote in the 1958 membership list and died at Glenroy in 1975 at 91 years.

RILEY, Robert  2367, Private, 4th Australian Commonwealth Horse (Victoria). He was a 20 year-old blacksmith from Collingwood when volunteering, born in Clifton Hill. He was listed at 13 Turnbull Grove, Northcote in 1958 and is shown in records as having died at Fitzroy in 1961 at 78 years.

SHEARER, Hugh  One of those shown on the membership list by initial only, but as Hugh in the directory. The membership list has him having served with the 5 Victorian Mounted Rifles and at 71 Bent Street, Northcote, but attestation lists reveal Shearer, was 96, Private, with the First Victorian Infantry (no enlistment details remain). He died in Preston in 1965 at 86 years of age.

Heidelbergshire

COCKRAM, Arthur  1675, Private, 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles. Born Warwickshire, England in 1880, listed as a boundary rider near Sale, next of kin in Hawthorn. He was invalided back to Australia, arriving 12 December, 1901. He also served in the Great War as a driver with the Army Service Corps, then in Balwyn: repatriated back to Australia after losing an eye and appointed as a Recruiting Officer in the Second World War. Noted as a Life Member of the South African Soldier’s Association of Victoria and shown on their 1958 list at 44 Station Street, Fairfield, Cockram died in the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital in 1960, listed as 78 years of age.

Alfred Hobart Sturdee

Although he had no connection with Northcote when he volunteered for the Boer War, a later addition to the community must warrant a mention.

Born in England in 1863, Sturdee came to Australia in 1886 and following his return from the South African War settled in Northcote, establishing a medical practice at "Stoneycroft", on the corner of High and Merri (now James) Streets to Northcote around 1903.

Undoubtedly the best known of the local doctors, Sturdee had extensive medical experience with the Citizen’s Forces before he served as a surgeon in the Boer War as part of the 4th Victorian Imperial Bushmen Regiment, being awarded both the Queen’s South Africa Medal with 3 clasps and the King’s South Africa Medal (two clasps).

He was Mentioned In Despatches for riding half a mile under fire to aid a wounded soldier (gazetted in London, 9 July, 1901). Sturdee was listed as a surgeon from Bendigo when he volunteered and he returned with the contingent, arriving back in Melbourne on 12 July, 1902.

He continued his connection with the civilian forces after his arrival in Northcote, and when he enlisted in the A.I.F. on 14 August, 1915 at 51 years of age, he held the rank of honorary Lieutenant Colonel in the Reserve Forces and it was noted he had 26 years military experience.

Sturdee was placed in charge of the ambulance corps in connection with the new force. His practice in Northcote was temporarily taken over by his locum tenens, Dr. Godfrey, and from December, 1915 by the Canadian-born Dr. James Webb.
He embarked on *HMAT Wiltshire* with the first contingent of Australian troops as a surgeon with the 2nd Field Ambulance of the 16th Australian Army Medical Corps and served during the Dardanelles campaign, initially on board the hospital ships *Mashobra* and *Seang Choon*, then from 30 May, 1915 on Gallipoli before being repatriated to England in August suffering from influenza.

He later returned to Egypt before being transferred to France in March, 1916 where he was Mentioned in Despatches on another two occasions and was also awarded the Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George.

Sturdee returned to Australia in April, 1917 and later continue his long connection to the military by becoming the principal medical office for the newly formed Repatriation Department in Victoria before retiring from the military in 1930.

He later moved to Gladstone Street, Sandringham where he died on 19 June, 1939 at 76 years of age an following a long illness. He left a widow, a son, Vernon (below) and a daughter (Mrs. Weston). He was buried in Cheltenham Cemetery.

Alfred Sturdee was a brother of Vice-Admiral Sir Frederick Doveton Sturdee, the first baronet who was in charge of a British squadron which achieved a decisive naval victory in the South Atlantic in December, 1914. He was appointed Admiral of the Fleet in 1921.

Alfred’s son Vernon (1890 - 1966) 92 embarked two days later after his father as the Lieutenant Adjutant with the Divisional Engineers Headquarters. He served with great distinction at Gallipoli and in France and in November 1917, was appointed commander, Royal Australian Engineers, 5th Division. In a rare honour for an officer from the dominions, he was seconded in March, 1918 to British General Headquarters, France.

He remained in the A.I.F. after the war, becoming an instructor at Royal Military College, Canberra and in February, 1933 being appointed director of military operations and intelligence at Army Headquarters, Melbourne and from 1940 as a Lieutenant-General, serving as Chief of General Staff for the Australian Army.

He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order during the War and later made a Companion of the British Empire. In a rather sad twist, the-then Colonel Vernon Sturdee was invested with the C.B.E. just four days before his father died.

**AWARDS AND DECORATIONS**

**The Queen’s South Africa Medal**

Despite the rather grand title, the Queen’s Medal was a standard decoration issued to all British and colonial troops that served in South Africa between 11 October, 1899 and 31 May, 1902.

The Oz-Boer Database Project 93 lists the award for some servicemen and not for others; in reality, all would have received it in some form with the exception of the handful that enlisted with the Fourth and Sixth Australian Commonwealth Horse contingents, both of which arrived in South Africa too late to see action.

The clasps were awarded for either a general theatre of war (eight were defined) in which the soldier served, or alternatively for a specific battle; some 18 possible clasps were awarded within this latter category.

The awarding of clasps represented longevity of service rather than any particular act of bravery; in most cases, the award was consistent across an entire Contingent except for men who may have had exceptions through missing action through wounds, illnesses, etc.

Members of the Fifth Mounted Regiments for instance almost universally received three clasps annotated CC OFS & Tvl - Cape Colony, Orange Free state and the Transvaal.

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93 [OzBoer War Project](http://members.pcug.org.au/~croe/ozb/oz_boer.cgi)
The King's South Africa Medal

The King's Medal was a later decoration following the death of Queen Victoria died on 22 January, 1901 and succession to the throne of Edward VII). It was only awarded to troops who served after 1 January, 1902 and who had completed eighteen months service before 1 June, 1902. The medal was given in conjunction with the Queen's Medal, not as a separate award.

Two clasps were available, one for those who saw service in 1901 as part of their eighteen months, the second for those who saw service in 1902 (this in practice meant that virtually all medals were issued with two clasps - it would have been extremely rare for a man to have completed eighteen months in 1902 without serving in 1901).

The Queen’s Medal or The King’s Medal were also available nurses, but with no clasps.

The vast majority of Australian troops had returned before 1902 and the small number of King's Medals that were awarded to Australians were to men who had returned with the earlier colonial contingents and then re-enlisted in 1902 in the Australian units formed after Federation the previous year.

Charlie Patterson was the only one of the Preston men to be awarded the King’s Medal, along with the later Northcote arrival Dr. Alfred Sturdee, who was awarded the Queen’s South Africa Medal with 3 clasps and the King’s South Africa Medal.

BOER WAR - A BACKGROUND

With Australia still over a year away from Federation, it was left to the individual states to prepare plans for the supply of volunteers should troops be required for service in the eventuality of a war in South Africa.

By any stretch of imagination, this could have only resulted in an ineffectual, piecemeal approach; hence a Conference of Military Commanders was convened at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne at the invitation of the Victorian Government.

The Conference was chaired by the Commandant of the Victorian forces, Major-General Sir Charles Holled-Smith and included representatives from all Australian colonies. The conference lasted several days an it was decided (in part) that necessary Acts of Parliament should by passed without delay by each of the Colonies to enable their respective Military Contingents to act, either as a combined force or otherwise outside Australia.

It was perhaps an indication of the lack of uniformity between the various colonial forces that when it came to an agreement that an initial force of about 2,000 should be raised, there were significant differences in the type of servicemen proposed.

The New South Wales “quota” of 745 was composed of Horse Artillery, 120, Cavalry and Mounted Rifles, 300, Infantry, 265 and Department Corps and Engineers, 60. Queensland’s target of 275 was entirely made up of a Mounted Rifles and Machine Gun section. South Australia was split between Mounted Rifles, 60 and Infantry, 80. The Tasmanian and Western Australian forces were both 160 and in each case purely infantry; whilst Victoria’s 543 was split between Mounted Rifles 198 and infantry, 345. The General Staff was to number 30, to be made up across the Colonies.

The Conference even went as far as establishing pay rates for the volunteers; gunners and privates, 4s.6d. per day, bombardiers, 6s. 6d. corporals, 7s. sergeants, 8s., company sergeant-majors, 9s., staff sergeants, 10s, warrant officers 11s., lieutenants 16s. plus 3s. field allowance, captains 20s. and 3s. 6d., majors 25s. and 4s 6. Despite a number of changes of organizational structure in the Australian contribution over just on two-an-a-half years of the war, there were few changes to the original pay levels.

The period of service was set at twelve months; and portions of the serviceman’s pay could be allocated to nominated persons in Victoria, and one month’s pay in advance could be drawn by any member of the Contingent who wished to do so.

In fact, none of the forces were in place by the time war broke out about a fortnight later; there had been an Australian Regiment formed, but this was purely an administrative battalion.

Victoria passed several Acts in 1899 and 1900 to enable the forces to be raised.
Act 63 Victorian No. 1619 (The Victorian Military Contingent Act) enabled forces to be raised and to come under the Imperial Army Act of 1881 when serving with Her Majesty’s regular troops (ultimately known as the First Contingent) with £30,000 appropriated; 63 Vic. No. 1627 allocated £35,000 for a Second Contingent; No. 1655, £30,000 for a Third Contingent; 64 Vic. No. 1640 £45,000 for any further Contingents deemed necessary.

A further Act, 63 Vic. No. 1640 authorized contributions by municipal councils, banks, other bodies and individuals towards military Contingents, any member thereof or their relatives, or in aid of the Patriotic Fund. Several of the Bushmen’s Contingents from the various Australian colonies were funded by public subscription.

A Camp of Instruction was established under experienced officers and staff sergeants at Langwarrin where volunteers were medically examined, drilled, equipped and in cases of Mounted units, supplied with horses.

In reality, little training was required for the early Contingents because the majority were drawn from local regiments, but in the case of later battalions and Bushmen’s units, usually several weeks training was required to produce an effective and coordinated unit.

**FIRST VICTORIAN REGIMENT**

The C embarked on the s.s. *Medic* at Port Melbourne on 28th October, exactly one month after the Conference and just two weeks after the first volunteers were accepted.

The embarkation consisted of the commanding officer, Colonel J. C. Hoad (Adjutant-General of the Victorian Forces) 94: a Transport Officer, Commander W. J. Colquhoun; one company of Mounted Rifles consisting of 125 officers, non-commissioned officers and men under the command of Captain Duncan McLeish, plus 156 horses; plus one company of infantry, again 125 men and nine horses, commanded by Major G. A. Eddy.

A Tasmanian contingent of 80 men and four horses also embarked at Port Melbourne, the group joined by 127 men, three horses and nine mules at Adelaide, and 130 men and 17 horses at Albany.

The force of 588 men, 189 horses and the nine mules arrived in Cape Town on 26 November and were immediately combined into an ‘Australian Regiment’ with Hoad as Commanding Officer and Eddy second-in-command.

This was the first occasion on which a regiment for active service was formed from troops representative of the various colonies of Australia (a Contingent of around 800 from New South Wales served briefly in the Sudan during an uprising in 1885, but no other colonies were involved).

The First Contingent served out its twelve months before embarking on 5 November, 1900 on board s.s. *Harlech Castle* and arriving in Melbourne on 4 December after stop-overs at Albany and Adelaide.

Of the original group, two officers (including Major Eddy) and ten from the ranks were killed in action; two officers and three other ranks died of wounds, two and four respectively from other causes - five from enteric fever, the other from sunstroke.

Four officers and 32 others were wounded in action and repatriated back to Australia; nine men of other ranks were listed as ‘other casualties’, seven of these were captured by the Boers, the other two accidentally injured.

SECOND VICTORIAN MOUNTED RIFLES

The second contingent of Victorian troops was formed under much the same conditions as the First, with the exception that there was no infantry component (in fact no further infantry were sent, all subsequent units were Mounted Rifles or Bushmen).

The Second Victorian Mounted Rifles totalled 264 - 14 officers, 12 sergeants, 10 artificers (in real terms, servicemen involved in the care and saddling of the horses), 4 buglers and 224 rank and file. They were accompanied by 305 horses, 28 assigned to officers, 238 to other ranks, 24 spare and 15 transport and pack duties.

The Second Contingent left Melbourne on 13 January, 1900, arriving at Cape Town on 5 February with the loss of just three horses over the arduous three weeks of the voyage.

One officer and nine from the ranks were killed or died; 2 officers and 4 men were transferred to other units; two officers and 13 others were struck off the strength in South Africa; one officer was commissioned in the British Imperial Army and the balance of ten officers and 223 others returned to Australia.

The Second Contingent were effectively taken out of action on 3 October, 1900 when they entrained for Pretoria, where they handed over all their horses to General French. They remained there until the 23rd and then proceeded to Cape Town on the 29th before embarking on the Harlech Castle on 7 November, ultimately reaching Melbourne on 4 December.

THIRD BUSHMEN'S CONTINGENT

There were Bushmen's Contingents formed in most colonies.

The Victorian version was largely subscribed for by the public after it was resolved that lieu of drawing men exclusively from the local volunteer corps, a force should be raised of men from country areas that had no military training, but were medically fit, preferably unmarried and had practical experience of riding in difficult terrain and an ability to shoot.

The Bushmen totalled 276; 15 officers, 13 sergeants; 10 artificers, 4 buglers, and 234 rank and file, with 360 horses. Included in the group was a privately raised force of 24 recruited and equipped by a Mr. John McLeod Cameron and known as Cameron's Scouts, plus a group of ten Victorian nurses.

As an indication that "Bushmen" was the appropriate title, estimates suggested that of the 276 men, 230 were listed as farmers or otherwise working on the land. Many of the man brought their own horses; in some cases, more than one.

The Third Bushmen's Contingent left for South Africa on s.s. Euralyus on 10 March, 1900. Seventeen were killed or died, five officers were transferred, three officers and 12 others were struck off the strength in South Africa; one officer and one N.C.O. were commissioned into the British Imperial Army; nine officers and 228 others returned to Australia.

The Victorian Bushmen embarked after serving their twelve months at Cape Town on 9 May, 1901 on the transport Morayshire and arrived in Melbourne on 6 June.

As was the case for all of the colonial units, none of the horses were returned; they remained in South Africa for the use of later Remount units.

FOURTH (IMPERIAL) CONTINGENT

Although they did not carry the title, the Fourth (Imperial) Contingent was raised on much the same basis as the Bushmen's Corps - seasoned bushmen, bold riders and crack shots.

This Contingent differed from the other four Victorian units in that it was specifically raised at the request on the British Imperial Government.

It was rumoured at the time that another European power was preparing to take over British possessions in other parts of the globe and that Britain may have been forced to remove some troops from South Africa as a result - this was denied by the British government, but questions continued to be raised in the British Parliament as to why the request was necessary given that previous offers of fresh troops from the Australian colonies had been rejected.
The Fourth served directly under the British Imperial Force and as a result, pay rates differed slightly. It was the largest to this date from Victoria; 31 officers, 598 other ranks, 778 horses and eleven wagons and each serviceman's commitment was to serve twelve months or to the conclusion of the War, whichever came first.

The Contingent left on 1 May, 1900 by the transport Victoria, arriving in South Africa on the 23rd. Consequently one officer and 22 others were killed or died; 14 officers and nine others were transferred; four officers and 25 others were struck off in South Africa; one officer and one of other ranks were commissioned into the British Imperial Force; and 17 officers and 505 from the ranks returned to Australia.

The Fourth Contingent served longer than most, embarking at East London, South Africa on s.s. Orient on 22 June, 1901 and arriving in Melbourne on 12 July.

FIFTH (MOUNTED RIFLES) CONTINGENT

The Fifth Contingent was enrolled in February, 1901 and consisted of eight companies of Mounted Rifles.

Preference was given to any men that had previously served in South Africa and to members of the Victorian Military Forces over civilians. Married men were discouraged unless they had displayed exceptional qualities previously serving in the Citizen’s Forces (this select group including Preston’s Thomas West).

Each company nominally consisted of a captain, four lieutenants, a company sergeant-major, company quarter-master-sergeant, a sergeant-farrier, a sergeant-saddler, five sergeants, six corporals, three shoeing-smiths, three saddlers, a bugler and 99 privates; a total of 126 men with 131 horses. With a small General Staff; the Fifth Contingent totalled 1,017 men and 1,099 horses.

The Contingent departed Melbourne of 15th February, 1901; because of its size, three vessels were employed - the bulk of the men on s.s. Orient, the horses and a horse-deck guard of about 100 shared aboard the City of Lincoln and Argus.

Oddly enough, a Second Battalion of the Firth Contingent embarked three days earlier, comprising 20 offices, 351 men and 401 horses. A Medical Corps of three officers and 28 men embarked the same day on a separate vessel.

Six officers and 48 from other ranks were killed or died, 14 officers and 69 others were struck off in South Africa; 60 officers and 854 others returned to Australia.

Again, the large number of men required two transports to be used to return the men home; two companies aboard s.s. St. Andrew; the remainder shipped to Durban on the Montrose and hence to Melbourne via the Custodian. They arrived home on the 25 and 26 April, 1902 respectively and the Regiment was disbanded a few days later.

SECOND BATTALION AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH HORSE (Victorian Units)

The Fifth (Mounted Rifles) Contingent was the last of the "Victorian" forces with later units raised after Confederation in 1901 serving as Australian forces.

After the Commonwealth had been established and the Australian Defences handed over to the new Federal Government, it was decided to send additional contingents of mounted troops to the war, the battalions to be of a representative nature with squadrons from the different states.

The First Battalion - which was "First" in name only; it left Australia on 15 February, 1902, more than a month after the "Second" battalion - was comprised of three companies from New South Wales, and one each from Queensland and Tasmania.

The Second Battalion consisted of three Victorian companies, one from South Australia and a half-company from Western Australia.

The system of selection and purchase of horses was left to State Commandants as it was for the Colonial contingents. In general terms, greys and those with dapple coats were not selected as it was thought they would be susceptible to sunburn in the harsh African climate), those under 16 hands were preferred as taller horses were though likely to develop back problems with the weight they would have to carry, and no unbroken youngsters were considered, authorities considering the five or six weeks required in training them up to a manageable standard not worthwhile.
The staff and Victorian units left Melbourne on S.S. St. Andrew on 12 January, 1912 with 21 officers and 351 men, with 401 horses. Given the short time they saw action in South Africa (around three weeks), casualties were light - just one death, 2 officers and 77 others were struck off in South Africa, 19 officers and 273 others returned to Australia.

FOURTH BATTALION AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH HORSE (Victorian Units)

The Fourth Battalion was organized along the same lines as the Second, the only difference the make-up of the force across the states - two companies from Victoria, and one each from South and Western Australia.

The battalion staff and Victorian companies left Melbourne on the S.S. Templemore on 26 March, 1902, picking up the South Australian and half the Western Australian company en route (the remainder of the Western Australians embarked on the transport Englishman).

The convoy arrived at Durban on 22 April and with peace negotiations under way, the Fourth Battalion was held behind the lines and saw no action. One man died of illness, the remainder returned to Australia via a number of transports.

SIXTH BATTALION AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH HORSE (Victorian Units)

Whereas the First to Fourth Battalions were formed on the basis of having companies drawn from each of three states, the Sixth Battalion (along with the Fifth in New South Wales) was a composite unit drawn from different districts within Victoria.

The battalion was subdivided into four Squadrons, then into four Troops.

"A" Squadron comprised troops from the Victorian Mounted Rifles and Melbourne Military District (two of 32 and 27 men each and horses), Warragul (29) and Sale (28). "B" Squadron : Wangaratta (32), Euroa (27), Yea (29) and Murchison (28). "C" Squadron : Bendigo (32), Kerang (27), Ballarat (29) and Maryborough (28), and "D" Squadron; Warrnambool (32), Colac (27), Hamilton (29) and Stawell (28).

Again, most of the officers and some men had already served. The unit embarked on two transports - the Menelaus on 16 May and the Manchester Merchant on the 19th. Both arrived at Durban on 13 June, some eight days after the cessation of hostilities and proceeded to Newcastle, Natal, arriving on the 18th. Orders were almost immediately received for their return to Australia and most had arrived back by 7 August.

The unit was disbanded the following day, and despite never having fired a shot in anger, there were two deaths, coincidentally both from the Sale Troop - one man dying at sea on the return voyage and another from pneumonia in Melbourne Hospital on 11 August.

Note on the Number of Embarkations

The figures quoted for each of the contingents above are taken from "Official Records of the Australian Military Contingents to the War in South Africa 1899-1902" compiled and edited for the Department of Defence by the retired Lieutenant-Colonel P. L. Murray and published in October, 1911.

On the remote chance that a reader may check these figures against those held by the Australian War Memorial, beware there is a catch!

As an example, Murray lists the Third Bushmen's Contingent from Victoria as 276 men (with a corresponding Nominal Roll), but a search of the AWM's rolls using their key "3 (BUSHMEN'S) CNTGNT" returns a list of 492.

A quick investigation reveals the cause of the discrepancy - in listing Boer War units, the AWM does not distinguish between colonies - there were also Third (Bushmen's) Contingents from South Australia (99) and Western Australia (116), hence the higher tally.

COMMONWEALTH ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

The Australian Commonwealth Army Medical Corps was comprised of units from all the Australian states under the command of Major T. A. Green (Field Hospital) and Major (later Sir Neville) Howse (Bearer Company).

Howse was noted at the time as a Victoria Cross winner, the award coming after an incident in June, 1900 where he carried a wounded man back to safety under heavy cross-fire.

The Victorian section included three officers, a staff-sergeant, two sergeants and 25 rank and file, but surprisingly little by way of medical staff (the surgeons appear to have been primarily from New South Wales which had had earlier special medical corps with their colonial forces; the Victorian contingent relied on medical officers attached directly to the unit).

The Army Medical Corps embarked with the First Australian Commonwealth Horse from Sydney on 18 February, 1902.

The Field Hospital unit established a stationary hospital of 100 beds, while the Bearer Company was attached to Thornycroft's Mounted Infantry Column. The Field Hospital Unit returned by the S.S. Norfolk, embarking at Durban, 5 July, 1902, and the Bearer Company embarked at Durban in the S.S. Drayton three days later.

There was one known local volunteer with the Corps, Private Alfred Bade [page 40]. He was listed as a labourer and appears to have originally enlisted in the New South Wales group, but he was included as one of the 25 Victorian "other ranks" when he embarked.

**NURSING SISTERS**

In response to a request from the High Commission for the Cape, a group of around 25 nursing sisters, eleven of whom were from Victoria proceeded to South Africa with the Third (Bushmen's) Contingent.

As in the case of the First World War, all were single and had at least three years' experience at home.

One, Sister Frances Hines died of illness in South Africa. Two were decorated, Sister Marianne Rawson (who was Matron of the group) was awarded the Royal Red Cross, Sister Isabel Ivey was Mentioned In Despatches.

**THE MARQUIS OF TULLABARINE’S 2nd SCOTTISH REGIMENT**

Despite the Fifth Contingent being considerably larger than the previous embankments, the number of volunteers far exceeded the number required and a ballot was conducted of those consider fit and ready to fight with preference given to men who had already served.

As a result of the surplus, special authority was given for a group of 250 men, many who had missed out on the ballot, to serve with the Marquis of Tullabarine's 2nd Scottish Regiment. It thus became the only non-Australian regiment to be raised (in part) on Australian soil.

The group embarked as "indulgence passengers" along with the Fifth Contingent on the S.S. Orient on 15 February, 1901, and were noted by the Officer Commanding troops on the voyage as 'amongst the very best on board'.

Although the background of this Regiment is somewhat less known because of their attachment to the British forces, it is known to have fought in several bitter battles - as evidenced by the inclusion of the high proportion of 18 out of the 250 men being listed on the AWM's Commemorative Roll devoted to Australians who died in the service of other countries in conflicts where Australians fought.

This represents a casualty rate of 7.2%, over double the rate for both Victoria and Australia, both of which coincidentally were around 3.5%. Most of the 2 Scottish received the Queen’s Medal with five clasps compared with three for most other contingents.

The 2nd Scottish Regiment is not included on AWM nominal rolls, nor was it included in statistical tables composed post-war and included below. Details are somewhat sketchy as the Australians were combined with a large number of British soldiers, but it is noted that the known Darebin volunteer, William Bowtell arrived back in Melbourne on 25 November, 1901. This is confirmed by other Australians noted as discharged on completion of service on 25 October, 1901, the same as Bowtell.

**BETHUNE’S MOUNTED INFANTRY**

With the rush of early volunteers far outweighing the number of places available in the First and Second Contingents, hundreds of Australians paid their own way to South Africa to join any unit they could find.

One of the most famous was Lieutenant Colonel Edward C. Bethune’s Mounted Infantry, which was said at various times to have had Australians (39 of which are believed from Victoria), Americans, Canadians and Scandinavians.

The Regiment was formed immediately war broke out - Bethune led the Regiment despite having lost his right hand in earlier fighting in India.
SPECIAL SERVICE OFFICERS

A small number of officers were sent to South Africa with the sanction of the War Office unattached to specific contingents and for deployment in various theatres as authorized by the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Kitchener.

A handful of officers who had gone to South Africa with specific contingents were later employed as such.

The five Victorians that served in this capacity were Major General (then Colonel) Sir John Hoad, formerly senior officer in charge of the First Victorian Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel C. E. Umphelby (originally employed as a Press Censor as he apparently had fluent linguistic skills, later with artillery), Major (later Lieutenant Colonel G. J. Johnston, Captain (later Major) J. H. Bruche and Major A. J. Christie.

The officers embarked at different times (Umphelby and Johnston together on 8 November, 1899) and were generally accompanied by non-commissioned ranks that acted as their batmen (servants).

The bulk of the Special Service Officers (around twenty) were from New South Wales.

AUSTRALIAN DICTIONARY OF BIOGRAPHY ENTRIES

Champ, Captain William Thomas (Pentridge Volunteers)

Cook, Sir Joseph (Minister of Defence at time of proposed nationalisation of Preston Rifle Range)

Downes, Major Francis (Military Commandant of Victoria)

Howse, Sir Neville Reginald (V.C., Co-Commander, Commonwealth Army Medical Corps)

Hoad, Captain John (later Sir John) (Adjutant-General, Victorian Forces at time of First Contingent)

McLeish, Colonel Duncan (Commander, First Victorian Infantry)

Merrett, Sir Charles Edward (Preston Rifle Club)

Olney, Sir Herbert Horace (Preston Rifle Club)

Patterson, Sir James Brown (Patterson family)

Price, Colonel Thomas (Commander, Second Victorian Contingent)

Reay, Lieutenant Colonel William Thomas (war correspondent, author, later member for East Bourke)

Rosenthal, Sir Charles (Preston Rifle Club)

Sturdee, Sir Vernon Ashton (son of Dr Alfred Hobart Sturdee of Northcote)
**SOME FACTS AND FIGURES**

**TOTAL VICTORIAN CONTINGENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transport</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Contingent</th>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Horses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medic</td>
<td>28 Oct, 1899</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euryalus</td>
<td>13 Jan, 1900</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>10 Mar, 1900</td>
<td>3rd Bushmen</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian</td>
<td>1 May, 1900</td>
<td>4th Imperial</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orient *, Argus, City of Lincoln</td>
<td>15 Feb, 1901</td>
<td>5th Mounted</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>1,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Andrew</td>
<td>12 Feb, 1901</td>
<td>2nd Battalion</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester Merchant</td>
<td>12 Feb, 1901</td>
<td>Medical Corps</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Templemore</td>
<td>26 Mar, 1902</td>
<td>4th Battalion</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester Merchant, Menelaus</td>
<td>19 May, 1902</td>
<td>6th Battalion</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Special Service Officers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Battalion Staff Officers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

* excludes 250 assigned to Scottish Light Horse

**TOTAL VICTORIAN DISPOSITION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disposition</th>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>Other Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Died or Killed</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discharged, or embarked for England and struck off in South Africa</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioned in Imperial Army</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returned to Australia</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>2,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>3,356</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lt-Col. Murray’s original table was annotated with the proviso: ‘These figures are in some respects estimates; it having been found impossible to obtain exact statements owing to commissions, attachments, enlistments, and discharges in South Africa for which no adequate returns have been made’.

(The obvious discrepancy is that 191 officers embarked, but dispositions were listed for 270 due to promotions in the field).

‘Discharged or Struck off’ means a few that were relieved of duties for disciplinary reasons and a surprising number of men, many of whom were British-born, who opted to head for England after their discharge.

**TOTAL AUSTRALIAN CONTINGENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colony/State</th>
<th>Contingents</th>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>Other Ranks</th>
<th>Horses</th>
<th>Guns and Wagons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>5,877</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>3,401</td>
<td>3,873</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2,763</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1,450</td>
<td>1,430</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1,168</td>
<td>1,179</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>859</td>
<td>15,604</td>
<td>16,357</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to differences in the way the records were maintained for the earlier colonial contingents. Lt. Col. Murray did not attempt a table of the final disposition of all Australian troops. South Australia, for example, did not keep consolidated records of promotions or those struck off in South Africa.
CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

"The subjoined list, which was published in General Orders in connection with the Commonwealth Horse shows the outfit supplied to Imperial Bushmen and Commonwealth Horsemens, and paid for by Imperial Government; and also rations in Camp of Instruction". 96

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED TO N.C.O.'S AND MEN

Uniform

One field service hat (with chin strap); 1 field service jacket; 1 pair pantaloons (with loop for belt); 2 pairs boots and 1 pair laces (spare); 1 great coat; 1 field service cap (with chin strip); 2 pairs puttees 97.

Kit and Sea Kit

One pair canvas shoes, with leather soles, and 1 pair laces (spare); dungaree suit, comprising 1 jacket, 2 pairs pants; 1 white hat (with strap); 1 blue jumper; 2 shirts (flannel); 2 under-vests; 3 pairs socks; Crimean cap, woollen (to come down over face, with hole for mouth); belt, leather, in lieu of braces; 2 towels, 1 razor, 1 shaving brush, 1 comb, 1 knife, 1 fork, 1 spoon (the last 7 items in holdall); housewife 98 (fitted); jack knife and lanyard; kit bag (number to be marked on in large letters); 1 "Jack Shea" pot (with strap); 1 section bag, to hold four kits; 1 pair spurs (with straps complete); 2 pairs drawers (woollen); 2 cholera belts (flannel); 4 small badges (for collars of tunics); 1 large badge (for hat); shoulder-strap badges; 1 book (note) and pencil; 1 bottle (water, aluminium, with strap); 1 calico bag (for ship use); 1 brush (clothes); 1 field dressing (with description cards); 1 haversack (tanned); 1 tin Vaseline; 2 pieces soap.

Saddlery

Saddle; bridle, complete, with ring bit; leathers (stirrup); irons (stirrup); girths, leather (folded); wallets, with 3 straps; straps, baggage, sets of three; 1 blanket, horse; 1 surcingle; 1 bag, water, canvas; 1 bag, nose; 1 brush, dandy; 1 brush, curry; 2 cloths, sponge; 1 rope, head; 1 net, forage; 1 sponge, water; 1 pcket, hoof; 1 tin saddle paste; 1 chamois, leather

Equipment

1 Bandolier, leather (160 rounds); 1 waterproof sheet, 6ft. 6in. by 3ft. 6in. with seven eyeholes, each side; i pair blankets (say from 43/4 to 5 lbs. each; 1 pair wire cutters to each group; field glasses to non-commissioned officers (4 per squadron)

Scale of Rations in Camp

Bread, 1¼ lbs; meat, 1½ lbs; tea, ¼ oz; coffee ¼ oz; salt 1/32 oz.; pepper, 1/32 oz.; potatoes, 1 lb., vegetables, ½ lb.; with the addition of the following extras twice a week; jam, 1 tin to 4 men; pickles, 1 bottle to 8 men; rice, ½ oz. per man.; curry, ½ oz. per 8 men.

Forage and Fuel

The daily scale of forage to comprise 6 lbs of oats, 12 lbs chaff; 4 lbs. Lucerne hay and 3 lbs. of bran. Daily scale of fuel:- 8 lbs. of wood or 2 lbs. of coal per man.

Officers allowed £30 to provide all equipment, uniform and saddlery for themselves as might be approved by State Commandant. Swords not taken, but officers required to provide themselves with following articles of equipment:- Sam Browne belt; revolver; compass; haversack, water bottle (which two latter may be issued from store on repayment.

96 Murray, Appendix 2
97 gaiters covering the lower leg
98 a rolled up pack containing needles, thread, spare buttons and bootlaces, etc.
TIMELINES

1899

October

The trustees of the privately-funded but financially stricken Preston Public Reading and Recreation Rooms in Clifton Grove agreed to sell by auction the land and buildings with the money to be held in trust for the purposes of a central public library fund. The rooms were bought by the Roman Catholic Church for a school. Five Preston men selected as part of the 250-man First Victorian Contingent for the Boer War.

Protests to Northcote Council over horses being trained at Fitzroy Racecourse on Sundays.

November

Another Preston man, Harold Reed, then in Queensland was noted as enlisting with the First Queensland Contingent. Former Preston Councillor John Clinch provided fascinating insights into local history with some reminiscences of some 45 years in the area. Victorian Government voted £1,000 for improvements to Merri Creek (one proposal was to build a channel from Preston Reservoir where an estimated 14,000 gallons of overflow water daily would “flush out” the creek). Brunswick, Northcote and Preston councils declined to contribute towards the cost.

December

A special meeting Northcote Council votes to buy out the English, Scottish and Australian Bank’s interest in the High street cable tram for £3,500. It was noted the line had been idle for over two year and it was estimated that over £1,000 would be required to restore it to working order... A Northcote youth, George Johnson was arrested along with another youth and charged with a series of crimes including a bomb attack on a house in Nicholson Street, damage to railway points at Fairfield that derailed a train and an attempt to derail a tramcar in St George’s Road, North Fitzroy at the crossing of the railway line. The Railways Department announces plans for new station buildings at Northcote (now Merri) and Middle Northcote (Northcote).

1900

January

First letters from Preston volunteers for the Boer War in South Africa appear in the Leader. Mr. T. Henderson, an engineer estimates the cost of repairing and restoring the High street, Northcote cable tram at £4,350 (£2,130 for track repairs, £1,075 for new rolling stock and grippers, £575 new pulleys, £510 for repairing cable house and machinery, and £240 for new cables). Northcote Council hears a proposal to install motor-driven trams on the route rather than cable.

February

Despite supporting flourishing Patriotic Funds in the area, both Northcote and Preston Councils reject a request from the Echuca Shire for a donation towards raising a Bushmen’s Contingent, quoting it as an inappropriate expenditure of ratepayer’s money. Northcote Council agrees that an application be made to the Governor-in-Council for authority to borrow £8,000 for purchase (£3,500) of the trams from the Melbourne Tramway Co. and the estimates costs of renewal of the line which had been idle for three years. A report by the Northcote Valuer places the population at 8,750, an increase of 679 over the previous year. A young woman, Margaret Heffernan, described as a servant at the Junction Hotel in Preston was sentenced to death for drowning her new-born baby in the Yarra. The case became a legal minefield with the judge noted as having no alternative to the sentence.

March

Death in South Africa from enteric fever of Private Arthur Coulson, a Clifton Hill resident with a close association with the All Saint’s Church in Northcote. After discussions over the condition of the piano at the Preston Shire Hall, a reader reveals that after being sold at the first great Exhibition at Crystal Palace, London, it was brought to Australia in 1852. Death of former Epping and Preston shire Engineer, Edmund Sheffield. Re-formation of Preston Rifle Club, formation of the Northcote club.
May

The Rev, Hector Ferguson of the Northcote Independent Presbyterian Church resigns after publishing a book "the doctrines of which were found on investigation to conflict with the standards of the Presbyterian Church" (he returned to England but maintained letters to the Leader).

"... on the Relief of Mafeking a public demonstration was held on the 26th May, 1900. It was a memorable day. A tableau was arranged on a lorry, depicting Britannia and Australia, with an improvised cannon mounted ready for action. A band preceded a procession of about 1000 children. In the evening there was a display of fireworks and a public meeting in the Town Hall, which was filled to overflowing in jubilation at the liberation of that gallant little band of soldiers who with true British puck had so long defied the enemy to conquer them ...".

June

Northcote Council decide to fund the £8,000 loan required for restoration of the tramway with an issue of 80 debentures with a face value of £100 each. Opening of the Kimberley Hall in Darebin Road. Death of Mr James R. Randall, long-time licensee of the Croxton Park Hotel and recreation ground.

July

Northcote rate collectors Herman Sachse and William Freebairn resign after accusations they were conducting private business during office hours. The pair ultimately returned after the Council decided not to investigate the matter. A pigeon shooting contest with 200 sovereigns in prizes held at the Fitzroy racecourse in St. George’s Road. Proposed Federal electorates announced : Northcote (2,001 voters), Preston (773), Alphington (361) and Heidelberg (364) proposed under seat of Brunswick (later East Bourke, 12,687).  Mernda was a separate electorate of 10,561 voters extending as far as Kilmore, but including Bayswater, Ferntree Gully Dandenong and Berwick. First 34 Victorian wounded arrive back from South Africa.

August

Repair work starts on the Northcote cable tram lines. Cr. Fred. Plant becomes the first Northcote-born man to be become Mayor of the town.

"My husband is out on active service in South Africa and I won’t receive any money from him until November. I have seven children and somebody has to stay home to mind the two babies while I am out working". This was the very strong reason a mother gave Northcote Court on Monday for not sending her daughter to school the required number of days during the quarter ending June, yet the magistrates had to smother their feelings of sympathy and fine her 2/6d. Though it be for the general good, the "compulsory clause" hardly works out in some cases. The Leader, 18 August, 1900

(The detailed report from the Northcote Court nominated two names "and another" as being fined. The excuse doesn’t ring true with the Defence Department’s preference for single men, but of course, the truth was not always told when volunteering. He could also have been one of those that paid there way to South Africa to link up with a local force).

September

Repairs of the cable tram delayed with new cable ordered from England expected to take four months to arrive; meanwhile, Council grants a request from Northcote Football Club for lengths of the old cable for fencing the oval. Preston Football Club defeat Collingwood Juniors at Brunswick Street to win first of three consecutive Junior Football Association premierships.

October

Northcote Council announce terms for lease of cable tram including a six-year term and a deposit of £500. Electioneering for the State election begins (six candidates stand for East Bourke, two to be elected. Mr. M. J. S. Gair, an Essendon solicitor, was returned unopposed as the third member).
November
The incumbent David Methven and Major W. T. Reay, a member of the Mounted Rifles and former journalist with *The Herald* are returned for East Bourke. First Victorian Contingent arrive back in Australia via *s.s* *Harlech Castle*. Former Northcote Rate Collector Herman Sachse, then a real estate agent found dead of shooting himself in the head (financial worries cited).

December
Preston Council ask Postal Department for extra letter carriers. "Welcome Homes" at Shire or Preston hall and Northcote A.N.A. for returning soldiers. Plans released for subdivision and sale of 16 acres land owned by George Plant adjacent to Croxton railway station.

1901

**January**

Australia becomes a federation. Edmund Barton becomes the first Prime Minister of Australia; the 7th Earl of Hopetoun becomes Governor-General. Australia mourns the death of Queen Victoria. Day of mourning set for Saturday, February 2.

**February**

Northcote Council accepts an offer of £200 from local contractors Messrs Dynan and Goldsworthy to run the High Street cable trams. with Council to retain all profits exceeding £4 per week. Reverend Andrew Kellaway introduced as minister of All Saint’s Church.

**March**

Northcote Tramway officially re-opens on 23 March. Plans announced for a cycling track at Northcote Park. Death of James Ryan, long-standing secretary for the shires of Epping and Whittlesea. Australia’s first Federal Election

**April**

The *Leader* notes that over one weekend, more than 10,000 penny fares were taken on the cable tram. Previous Victorian M.L.A. for East Bourke, Mr J. Hume Cook is confirmed as Bourke’s first Federal member, securing the highest tally of 3,021 votes out of 8,767 cast (preferential voting did not then exist). Another former East Bourke M.L.A., Robert Harper was elected to Australia’s first Federal Parliament in the seat of Mernda. Torrential rain causes floods in both Preston and Northcote and halt cable trams in High Street.

**May**

Opening of first Federal Parliament at the Exhibition Building, Melbourne. The Union Jack is officially adopted as a temporary Australian flag; some 1,400 students noted at Northcote State School for the unfurling ceremony. Opening of the Rechabite Hall in Westbourne Grove, Northcote. Death reported of a Mrs Alice Blunden after being hit by a train at Preston Station.

**June**

Despite objections from several ratepayers, Preston Council agree to erect an inner fence around Preston Park oval at a cost of £57. Northcote Council accepts Messrs Dynan and Goldsworthy’s surrender of the tram contract, but rejects a proposed transfer of lease.

**July**

Several public meetings are held in a bid to identify a local candidate for Legislative Assembly elections. New Preston rifle range opened to the north of Edwards Street (later offered to Federal Government as a central site). The Northcote Mayoress Mrs F. J. Plant inaugurates the Rockery Gardens from the Merri Creek to Westgarth street by planting a commemoration tree outside All Saint’s Church.

**August**

New calls for a direct rail link via Fitzroy. Northcote Council accepts an offer from Mr. S.I. Dorum to run the cable tram at a rental of £5 per week (Dynam and Goldsworthy continued to operate the tramway in the interim). Death in the South African War reported of Private Frederick George Dau, the first local resident.

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101 Simon Dorum was one of six Americans brought to Melbourne to co-ordinate the cable tram system. He was in Jackson Street, Northcote before his death in October, 1914.
September
Fire started by burglars destroy a new shop in Preston, damages estimated at over £2000. A man named John Edwardes, alias Findley was charged in the City Court early the following month. Edwardes had just been released on bail after being sentenced to 12 month’s imprisonment the previous December for stealing horses from McLean’s Tannery in Northcote. The Australian flag flown for the first time after a national design competition (with later modifications)

October
The direct railway link between the then Collingwood station at Johnson Street and Princes Bridge opens for the use of Heidelberg passengers, cutting an estimated six miles and 25 minutes off the previous route via North Fitzroy, Carlton and Princes Bridge. Finals of a series of musical and elocutionary competitions held to raise funds for the Northcote Library conclude at Northcote Town Hall. Tenders invited by Northcote Council for a new £2,500 loan. Preston Football Club secures second consecutive Junior Football Association premiership.

November
Agitation meetings in Preston after a proposed increase in railway fares and a barrage of criticism over the indirect route to Spencer Street

December
Railways Department agree to reduce the increase by about one half. New fares range from two pence second-class from Northcote to 5/6d from Reservoir, 6/6d or 12 shillings month respectively. After much debate, Preston Council votes in favour of erecting a Council abattoir. Tenders announced for a loan of £3,500 for the erection of the abattoirs and the completion of the main drainage scheme.

1902
January
Many arguments are raised both in Council and via The Leader over Northcote plans to increase rates of hiring rooms at the Town Hall. Death of enteric fever reported from Charlestown, South Africa of local volunteer William Saultry.

February
The Preston Free Lending Library opens to the public in temporary premises in the Shire Hall. Proposal for a central Post Office in Preston. Minister for Housing announces plans for “workmen’s homes” on a 240-acre site in the Pender’s Grove Estate. Breaker Morant is executed for having shot Boers who had surrendered.

March
East Bourke M.L.A. David Methven tells a joint meeting of northern suburbs representatives pressing for the direct railway line through Fitzroy that he believes there is no chance of the line being built and urges support instead for the loop to the Collingwood line. A poll of residents in the West Riding of Preston rejects controversial plans to erect a Council abattoir in the district. Bitter arguments later followed in Council as to the validity of the poll after it was revealed Cr. Braithwaite had appointed his poll-clerk as his deputy while he was absent from the polling booth.

April
Moves to hand back Northcote Park to a joint committee on the Ministry of Lands and the Council are defeated. Furore in Northcote Council over a decision to appoint a junior clerk from Drouin at £52 per year in preference to several local candidates.

June
Minor festivities following the official end of the South African War are overshadowing by preparations for the celebration of the Coronation of King Edward VII, ultimately postponed until August because of his attack of appendicitis. Rowdy meetings at both Northcote and Preston demand the re-enactment of the Factories and Shops Act suspended by the previous Victorian Parliament.

July
Much of Northcote is without water for the best part of a day after two small boys from North Fitzroy experiment by dropping a piece of rock from the St. George’s Road bridge onto the large water main on the bed of the creek, cracking the pipe and sending a water spout some 40 feet into the air.
A WHO'S WHO OF THE PRESTON RIFLE CLUB

James Mooney

Although he served on the Jika and later Preston Shire Councils almost as long as Braithwaite, rather less is known of James Mooney.

He continued as a Councillor until around 1890, an article on the introduction of the gas supply to Preston in August, 1888 (coincidentally the last mention of the rifle club) suggested he had driven bullocks through the district some 35 years earlier and had been a Councillor for twenty five years. He was listed as a dairy farmer in most directories.

His "paddock" also seems to have been a popular spot for local picnics, suggesting that while the exact location is not known, it was described as "west of the Reservoir Station" - the reservoir itself was a popular day excursion and highly favoured by a number of bicycle clubs around Melbourne who found it an ideal distance for a round trip from the city and inner suburbs.

Despite the construction of the Whittlesea railway in 1888 and many major subdivisions around Preston in the late 1880s, the rifle range remained intact for several more years and it was noted when the new Rifle Club was formed in March, 1900 that "no trouble is anticipated as to ranges, there being one already near the reservoir".

Frank W. Donovan

Frank Donovan acted as social commentator on many subjects in Preston without ever running for office, although he was active in several local organisations and perhaps best known as the first President of the Preston chapter of the Australian Natives Association formed in 1886. The commentary role was continued in later years by his son, Thomas.

It is not known whether any of his direct family enlisted, but a nephew, Thomas Radford Donovan was one of the first casualties reported by the Leader following his death in hospital in Egypt from unknown causes in January, 1915. Donovan for reasons unknown was serving with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

Another nephew, William Donovan Glanfield also died of disease while serving, in his case in October, 1918 when he was stationed in Damascus with the 8th Light Horse Regiment.

The family's connection with the Preston district traced back to 1852 when Frank's father David settled in the area.

George and Frank Apsted

George and Frank, the Apsted brothers are believed to have left the district for some years before returning during Preston's post-war boom period.

George Apsted was the head of a syndicate that built Preston's first motion picture theatre, the Star, on the south-eastern corner of High and Gower Streets.

The Star opened in September, 1922 (featuring The Mark of Zorro, starring Douglas Fairbanks junior), followed around twelve months later by the Gowerville on the corner of Plenty Road and Garnet Street, also constructed and operated by the syndicate.

Both theatres were renovated in the late 1940s and re-opened under different names - the St. James and Melody respectively.

Richard Staples

Richard Staples was the second of three brothers to establish farms in the district. The eldest, George, was the first to be listed with his father around 1877, the address given as Newlands - later reports suggest the property was between Elizabeth Street and the Merri Creek.

He was tragically killed in 1895 when a firearm discharged while he was shooting wild cats on his property, killing him instantly.

Richard and his younger brother John established adjacent properties in Gilbert Road around half-way between Regent and Edwards Streets (there were no other streets at the time to help establish a more exact location).
Both were listed in directories as farmers, but there are regular reports of the pair applying to the Preston Shire for slaughtering licences. It is also suggested that they ran pigs on their farms but these were not slaughtered in Preston.

**T. Eugene Rodda**

Noted amongst the organisers of the club’s first open day was a well-known identity around the district, T. Eugene Rodda.

Rodda arrived in the district in 1883, having been appointed head master of the Preston Grammar School on the corner of High and Station Streets, North Preston.

Although he does not appear to have been an active participant in the Rifle Club, he made an immediate mark on the sporting fields, winning the then Preston Cricket Club’s batting averages in his first two (and possibly only two) seasons with the club.

As well as some obvious talents wielding a cricket bat, he was also a painter and musician of some renown and later became a leading figure in the Preston Masonic Lodge, being the first to carry the title of Worshipful Master when the Lodge opened in 1889.

**Sergeant Merrett**

The other high-flyer amongst those at the club’s meetings was the little-known Sergeant Merrett, in later years the Honourable Colonel Sir Charles Edward Merrett. 102

Merrett’s career in the armed forces began in 1880 when he joined the St Kilda Rifles.

He rose through the ranks, transferring to the Victorian Mounted Rifles in 1883, becoming lieutenant and quartermaster (1889) and captain (1892).

After transferring to the Australian Light Horse, he served as captain (1903) and major (1905) with the 10th, 11th and 29th brigades before becoming, in 1915, lieutenant-colonel of the 5th Light Horse Brigade, then the oldest serving light horse officer.

Merrett was chairman of the Victorian Rifle Association for many years, chaired the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations and led Australian teams in English competitions on three occasions.

Deemed too old to serve overseas when the First World War erupted (he was then 54), he served instead on a committee charged with the selection of officers for the A.I.F. He retired from military service in 1920 with the rank of Colonel.

Merrett’s working background was in farm machinery, and he was active in several associations promoting pastoral pursuits, most notably with the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria with whom he served a record term as president from 1915 to 1947, a year before his death.

He was also active on the ‘liberal’ side of politics for many years, although his one attempt to gain a seat in Parliament (in 1913) was unsuccessful. He was a South Melbourne councillor in 1915-37 and mayor in 1922-23.

Merrett was appointed C.B.E. in 1929 and knighted in 1934.

He and his wife Annie (nee Slocombe) had a daughter and two sons, one of whom was Charles junior, a flight lieutenant with the Australian Flying Corp and who died from injuries following an accident near Dover, England, in 1916.

**Major William Palliser**

Major William Palliser appears to have been the guiding light on military matters so far as the revived Preston Rifle Club was concerned and was noted as the main training instructor.

On the formation of the club, the Leader suggested that the club were fortunate in having his services given “he had considerable experience in military matters and rifle shooting” - although the article revealed nothing to verify just where this experience was gained.

Sometimes the source of a mystery can be gained by working backwards from a known set of later facts - given we have long forgotten the rules established in Clear English 101 some forty years ago, this may be “deduction” or “induction”.

Palliser died in Elsternwick in 1919 at 86 years of age. This in itself is perhaps not highly significant at first glance, but some simple arithmetic (still remembered) suggests he must have been around 68 when he took on his role with the later Preston Rifle Club.

Directories first show him living in Preston in 1895, on the north-western corner of High and Showers Streets - the corner to the south then occupied by the Prince Alfred Hotel - but by the time of the formation of the latter Rifle Club, the family were in West Street.

The first appearance of the family name (possibly tracing to Gloucestershire, England) in Victorian directories came in 1893 when 'Major William Palliser' was listed in Park Street, Brunswick.

The same directory also lists 'W. Palliser' as the headmaster of the Queensberry Street State School in North Melbourne - given these were the only two appearances of the family name over a nearly a decade, it seems a fair bet they were one and the same.

Before that date, there is no reference to a family of that name existing in Victoria; in directories, in the somewhat ramshackle records of the Volunteer Corps, or is there anything in Victorian immigration records.

Electoral rolls over the next three or four years after the reformation on the Preston Rifle Club reveal one of his daughters, Ethel, was also a qualified teacher and shows William 'retired, of independent means'.

One of his sons, George Robert had served six years with the British South Africa Police before enlisting with the South Africa Light Horse during the Boer War. Letters to his father commenting on life in South Africa were published in local newspapers in both Broadford and Warragul, the latter seemingly the original location of the family. He also enlisted as a 44 year-old in World War 1 and returned from Gallipoli wounded in September, 1915.

**Lieutenant Charles Stewart**

Charles Stewart earned his commission when appointed Lieutenant of the Victorian Mounted Rifles in 1894, although just where he served is not known.

Several references to him in club reports suffix his name '(V.M.R)' suggesting he continued his commission while involved with the Preston club. Despite his role as vice-president, Stewart rarely seems to have taken part in active competition, perhaps because of other duties with the volunteer movement.

It was noted that some 23 of the Metropolitan detachment of the Mounted Rifles were on active service in South Africa, two of whom had returned wounded, while three or four other wounded remained in South Africa.

In civilian life, he was listed as a civil engineer living in West Street, President, but at the time the club was formed and henceforth for several years, Stewart was Secretary to the Shire of Preston, a position roughly equivalent to that of the later Town Clerk.

**Constable William "Bill" Spratling**

The "Mr Spratling" mentioned in number of Leader reports was in fact Constable William "Bill" Spratling, for many years the Shire's senior policeman.

He was first stationed in the district in 1889, and by the time the Rifle Club had been revived, Spratling had been actively involved in a number of sporting clubs around the town, especially the early cricket clubs where he was active both as a player and in several administrative positions.

Spratling along with two other constables also tried a couple of times to initiate a Victoria Police Rifle Club, but failed as the Defence Department initially refused to countenance a police club.

The club was eventually formed and Spratling represented the new team, one highlight being an equal third placing in the prestigious King's Prize in October, 1910.

Several hundred competitors entered the event with the field whittled down to 100 on the final day. *The Argus* correspondent suggested that the excited crowd may have cost Spratling his chance at the prize - an earlier competitor had completed his round with a score of 322 points, and spectators identified Spratling as one of the three or four that could better the tally and surrounded him as he took his last five shots - one missed and he was left with 322 points, one behind two other shooters.

Spratling was later a Councillor of several years standing, and when his son Lindsay enlisted in October, 1917, his address was given as care of the Oakleigh Police Station.

His contribution to the early growth of the area was acknowledged when the Council renamed Wilfred Street in Reservoir to Spratling Street.

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\[103 \text{The Leader, June 16, 1900}\]
Richard Henry Robinson

The Rifle Club’s provision of twelve month’s tuition in rifle shooting to a senior student from South Preston State School paid dividends in a roundabout way, albeit over a decade later.

The young Robinson selected from South Preston State School was Richard Henry.

He enlisted in Queensland just a week after the outbreak of war and served in the Field Artillery, reaching the rank of Regimental Sergeant Major.

Robinson is perhaps unique amongst the 330,000 men and women that served overseas in that post-war he was awarded the Croix de Virtue Militara First Class by the Romanian Government.

Sadly, little is known of the circumstances, but some notes in Robinson’s war archives reveal the decoration was struck by the Romanians on 13 September, 1916 to commemorate the country’s entry into the war and was awarded either as First Class in gold to commissioned officers and Second Class in silver to non-commissioned men.

A brother, Thomas Carey Robinson was killed in action at Ypres, Belgium on 12 October, 1917. Known as Carey, he was the captain of the Preston Cricket Club for the two seasons before he enlisted. He had also previous been active in the field for Northcote and was still a non-playing member of that club.

Edward Moulden

Despite the early reports of the revived Preston Rifle Club having an existing rifle range available (which we must assume was the Mooney’s Paddock of the 1880s club, some nine months after its inception they club announced a new home.

At the time of opening, the rifle range was described as being adjacent to Preston-Reservoir railway station, but later reports on the club’s activities refer to “the new lake range” and shooting contests over a range of 900 yards, suggesting it extended all the way to the land Dyer Edwards’ later donated to the Shire to become part of an expanded lake reserve.

Other reports gave the name of the new site as “Moulden’s Paddock” and hence we can trace the site of the butts.

Edward Moulden was listed in directories as a cattle dealer and farmer, oddly enough with his nearest neighbour on the north-west corner of high and Edwardes Streets usually shown as a wine café, hardly common for an area as remote as the Reservoir of the day.

One of Moulden’s sons, Reginald enlisted within a fortnight of the outbreak of the Great War and contracted malaria in Egypt and was hospitalised several times. He was repatriated home to Australia in November, 1917 to carry out nursing duties locally and discharged around twelve months later and admitted to the Base Hospital in St. Kilda Road, then the Caulfield Military Hospital and finally to what his father termed “the Exhibition slaughterhouse”, an Emergency Hospital set up in the Exhibition Buildings during the influenza epidemic of early 1919.

The family had earlier suffered another tragedy with the loss of a 15 year-old daughter, Evelyn who was killed in a riding accident at the Whittlesea Show in 1904.

John Peter Howe

Howe was captain of the Rifle Club from around 1908 and served in a couple of administrative positions in the controlling Rifle Associations as well as being one of the promoters of the short-lived plans for a National Rifle Range.

In civilian life, he was one of the founders (along with Henry Olney) of Howe & Co. Leather in High Street, South Preston, eventually the last survivor of the tanning industry that so many Preston men relied on for employment.

The family was another that had a somewhat tragic background.

Howe himself died in a private hospital in East Melbourne on 1 July, 1917, just six weeks after one of his sons, George died of wounds while serving as a Sergeant with the 38th Battalion in France.

Before his death, “J. P.” had been President of the Shire of Preston, was a Member of the Legislative Assembly in New South Wales before the family moved to Victoria, and was the incumbent president of the Preston Bowling Club at the time of his death.

105 The Argus, 2 July, 1917, The Leader, 7 July, 1917
George's younger brother Harry drowned at Murchison while on holiday over the Christmas period of 1912, and post-war, a daughter Nellie was killed in a motor accident in 1929.

The family home "Carmel" at 12 Hotham Street was one of several mansions built during the boom times of the late 1880's and with several extensions added in recent years serves today as an aged-care facility.

**Philip Fargher**

Fargher is not specifically mentioned, but as a Northcote resident, he is included courtesy of his work as secretary of the Victorian Rifle Association from 1906 until 1911 when he became the Area Commander of volunteer forces for Northcote after a somewhat controversial law declaring compulsory home training was introduced by Australia's first Labor Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, on July 1.

Born on the Isle of Man, Fargher first became involved with the volunteer forces when he joined with the Ballarat Rifles in 1887, and was widely regarded as the best rifle shooter in Victoria, winning the coveted Queen's Prize at Williamstown in 1892 and later he representing Australia twice in international competitions in England.

The family moved to Northcote around 1897, Fargher in his "civilian" life being an engineer with the Melbourne Tramways Company.

He was noted at the 1900 conference that saw the overhaul of rules governing rifle clubs, but there was no indication of which, if any, specific club he was representing and he does not seem to have taken any role in the subsequent formation of the Northcote Rifle Club.

Fargher died at his home in South Crescent, Northcote on 7 September, 1916 and was buried with full military honours at Northcote Cemetery.

In a horrific week for the family, his eldest son Philip junior died just six days later near Strazelle, France from the effects of gas poisoning.

**Charles Rosenthal**

We leave the crème-de-crème until last.

Although he had not been in the area long, the Leader report of 24 March, 1900 reveals that the motion that led to the formation of the Preston Rifle Club was put by "C. Rosenthal", the same gentleman later referenced as an early member of the committee.

To give his full title upon his death in 1954, Sir Charles Rosenthal (C.B., C.M.G., K.C.B.) was a short-term resident of Preston and has never been a well-known name around the district (other perhaps as the piano player at All Saint's Church as mentioned by the Leader in 1918 when they recalled his earlier time in the district).

Rosenthal joined the Geelong Battalion of the Victorian Militia Artillery in 1892 and later moved to Melbourne.

His time on the committee of the Preston Rifle Club must have very short - his Australian Dictionary of Biography entry does not mention him in the area and suggests he was transferred to Sydney in 1900 by the architectural firm that he worked for.

"A Far Famed Name" claims that it was a recommendation from William Braithwaite that saw Rosenthal accepted as a commissioned officer in the New South Wales forces, initially in 1903 as Second Lieutenant in the Militia Garrison Artillery.

He transferred to the Australian Field Artillery in 1908, and was promoted major and given command of a howitzer battery.

In 1914 Rosenthal became commanding officer of the 5th Field Artillery Brigade and in September of that year embarked as Lieutenant Colonel in charge of the 3rd Field Artillery. He was twice wounded at Gallipoli, the second injury forcing his transfer to England in August.

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107 A Far-Famed Name : Braithwaite of Preston, Winty Calder, 1990 (available at Darebin Libraries)
He returned to Egypt after the evacuation of Gallipoli was given command of the artillery of the new 4th Division and then promoted to Brigadier General in February 1916.

Rosenthal was appointed commander of the 9th Infantry Brigade in July, 1916, and after again being wounded, he was appointed to command the 2nd Division of the A.I.F. and promoted to Major General in May, 1918.

After the Armistice, he remained in England and supervised the repatriation of troops before returning to Australia in January 1920 and was commander of the 2nd Division, Australian Military Forces, in 1921-26 and again in 1932-37.

He served for several years as an alderman of Sydney Municipal Council in 1921-24 and was chairman of its works committee and was the Nationalist member for Bathurst in the Legislative Assembly in 1922-25 and a member of the Legislative Council in 1936-37.

As well as his several civilian honours, his military career earned him Distinguished Service Order (1918), the Belgian Croix de Guerre (1917), the French Croix de Guerre (1918) and the Légion d’honneur 1919). He was also officially mentioned in dispatches no less than seven times.

Along from his spectacular military career, Rosenthal was also at the top of his profession of architecture
He was twice president of the Institute of Architects of New South Wales in 1926-30 and was also president of the federal council of the Australian Institutes of Architects in 1925-28.

Remarkably, and despite his professional achievements, Rosenthal was declared bankrupt in 1930.

In 1937 Rosenthal accepted the post of administrator of Norfolk Island which he governed throughout World War II, during which he raised a volunteer infantry unit.

He relinquished his office at the end of 1945 but lived privately on the island until 1948 when he returned to Sydney.

Rosenthal was also an accomplished musician noted for a fine baritone voice “in the front rank of oratorio singers in Sydney”, a talent not mentioned when the Leader in 1918 recalled his days at All Saint’s, and had a particular passion for church music.

The latter interest appears to have pervaded his architectural career - although mainly engaged in designing dwellings, Rosenthal also had several commissions for the design of churches in several N.S.W. country centres.

“While this war has been the grave of some reputations, it has been the making of others. About the years 1901-02, there resided in Preston one Mr. Charles Rosenthal. Though an architect by profession, one of his hobbies was music. He acted as the organist at All Saint’s Church and became known throughout the district as a very fine singer. In 1902, he removed to Sydney, where evidently we was seized with a desire for a military life, as he wrote to Colonel Braithwaite, who was then second in command of the Victorian Light Horse”.

“The colonel replied with a letter, which there is good reason to believe gave him the first step up the military ladder. In the whirligig of time, the former architect-organist-singer has become a general commanding the 2nd Australian Division in France, with Colonel Braithwaite’s son serving as an officer under him”.

The Leader, 26 October, 1918. The comments were published as part of a lengthy report on the various tributes around Preston following the announcement the previous week of the death in France of Lieutenant William McCarthy Braithwaite, the only son of Lieutenant Colonel and Mrs Braithwaite.
RULES AND REGULATIONS : GEELONG VOLUNTEER RIFLE CORPS. 1855

The first rules to be formally accepted by the Government were those proposed by the Geelong Volunteer Rifle Corps - these preceded the Melbourne Corps by four days.

Colonial Secretary’s Office
Melbourne, 8 January, 1855

RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE GEELONG VOLUNTEER RIFLE CORPS.

THE Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to approve and confirm the following Rules and Regulations of the Geelong Volunteer Rifle Club, made in accordance with the Act of Council, 18 Victoria, No. 7.

By His Excellency’s Command
WILLIAM C. HAINES

I. All members shall be balloted for. Persons desirous of becoming members of the Corps must be proposed by a member at a meeting at which there are no less than one-third of the members present, and shall be balloted for at the ensuing meeting.

If there are five black balls, the proposed member is to be refused. Any person who has been balloted for and rejected may be proposed again after a month has intervened, but if again rejected he can never be admitted.

When any person is proposed a member of the Corps, his proposer must hand over to the Adjutant the sum of five shillings as entry fee. If rejected, the amount will be returned.

II. The weekly subscription to the Corps is one shilling. No member may exceed a month in arrears, or to forfeit one shilling the first month, two shillings for the second month, four shillings for the third month, and if not then paid, to be dismissed from the Corps.

III. Officers shall on all occasions represent their respective companies. Each Company is to consist of one Captain, two Lieutenants and one Second Lieutenant.

IV. Members wishing to resign must give twenty-eight days’ notice in writing. Notice of absence exceeding seven days is to be given to the Commanding Officer through the Adjutant.

V. A member being absent from his district of enrolment more than three months at any time, unless good and sufficient cause for the same be shown, shall be considered to have resigned his appointment.

VI. Members of equal rank may exchange with each other from one Company to another with the consent of the Commanding Officer.

VII. Captains of companies will be responsible that the arms and accoutrements of their companies are kept in serviceable order.

VIII. Wilful damage to government arms, accoutrements or ammunition shall be made good by the parties injuring the same.

IX. Members using their own rifles must deposit 200 bullets, with patches, in bags of 50 each with the size of bore and name of member attached to each bag; these to be placed in store for issue in case of necessity. In addition, he must have in his possession 20 bullets ready for use, independent of those he may require for practice.

X. In the absence of a superior officer, the charge which was entrusted in him devolves upon the next in rank.

XI. The dress shall be according to the sealed pattern, from which no deviation will on any account be permitted.

XII. The distinguishing badge between officers and non-commissioned officers and privates to be: that the officers shall wear a sword with steel hilt and scabbard, black patent leather sling belt, ditto pouch belt and pouch, with silver whistle and chain worn over the shoulder; in addition to which Field Officers shall wear four stars on the collar, the Captains three stars, the Lieutenants two stars, and Second Lieutenant one star.

William George Haines was the Colonial Secretary spotted riding his horse at a gallop over Princes Bridge during the great Battle of Port Phillip Bay in 1854.
XIII. All complaints against any members of the Corps shall be submitted to a board of not less than three officers of the Corps; the President to be nominated by the Commanding Officer, and the remainder from a roster.

XIV. All regimental bye laws shall by regulated by a board of officers of the Corps, to be assembled for such purpose by the Commanding Officer; and such bye laws may be altered or amended by a board subject to the approval of the majority of the Corps.

XV. All days for drill and practice shall be given due notice of by the Adjutant.

XVI. FINES

1. Any member not having his arms, accoutrements or ammunition in good and serviceable condition, not less than one shilling, or more than five shillings

2. Any member attending parade not dressed in accordance with the established regulations, two shillings and sixpence for each offence.

3. Opposing an officer on drill or practice, five shillings.

4. Appearing at drill, &c., in a state of intoxication, one pound.

5. Using obscene language or swearing during business or on drill, &c., two shillings and sixpence.

6. Members not appearing at drill at the hour appointed without showing sufficient cause, two shillings and sixpence.

XVII. Once in every six months, the Corps shall meet for ball practice, when the prize medals (to be given by the Government) will be awarded as follows:

A medal and clasp, with red ribbon, to the best shot in the Corps.

A smaller medal, with blue ribbon, to the best shot in each Company.

The prize medal for each Company will be awarded to the volunteer who puts the greatest number of balls out of the regulated number of rounds fired into the target. If two or more gentlemen put in equal numbers, they will contest the prize amongst themselves by firing three or five extra rounds.

The Regimental Medal, or first class prize, will be contested for by the six men from each Company who have put the greatest number of balls into the target during the regulated practice.

Should it fall to the lot of the winner of one of the Company Medals to gain the Regimental Prize, as he cannot hold both, the Company Medal will be given to the next best shot in his Company.

These medals will always be worn as an honourable distinction of the left breast.

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These medals will always be worn as an honourable distinction of the left breast.

The Corps will not be called upon service beyond the town and immediate district of Geelong without consent of its members.

THOMAS J VALIANT
Lieutenant Colonel, 40th Regiment
Inspecting Field Officer of Volunteer Corps

(William George Haines was the Colonial Secretary spotted riding his horse at a gallop over Princes Bridge during the great Battle of Port Phillip Bay in 1854).
## INDEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ahern, Lieutenant Albert (Clifton Hill)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alexander, Trooper William</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Bartlett, Private Frederick</td>
<td>32, 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beatson, Brigadier General S. B. (British)</td>
<td>28, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beckett, Captain (Dr.) Thomas George</td>
<td>1, 20, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bliss, Private Frederick</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bloxsome, Private George</td>
<td>30, 31, 32, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOWELL, PRIVATE GEORGE</td>
<td>39, 55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Braithwaite, Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) William</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Broadhurst, Thomas (tanner)</td>
<td>16, 27, 34, 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Butler, Private John</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Calder, Winty</td>
<td>5, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collins, Private Willie</td>
<td>27, 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coulson, Private Arthur (died of fever)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cramer, Private Charles</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Dau, Private Frederick (killed)</td>
<td>34, 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downes, Major General Francis</td>
<td>3, 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eddy</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eddy, Major George</td>
<td>16, 25, 37, 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emery, George</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eunson, Private Donald</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evans, Private Alfred</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evans, Trooper Edwin</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Farlow, Lieutenant Frederick</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fifth Mounted Rifles</td>
<td>28, 29, 31, 32, 34, 39, 53, 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Victorian Contingent</td>
<td>27, 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fourth (Imperial) Contingent</td>
<td>30, 36, 37, 39, 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fourth Battalion Australian Commonwealth Horse (Victorian Units)</td>
<td>49, 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Gast, Private Joseph</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Hehir, Private Timothy</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hendrie, Private Andrew</td>
<td>1, 2, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 34, 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heron, Private George</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hoad, Major General Sir John</td>
<td>42, 51, 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hooper, Private John</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Howe, Cr. James Peter</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hull, Private Francis</td>
<td>1, 2, 22, 25, 27, 28, 34, 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Jackson, Trooper Albert</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jewell, Private George (&quot;Dinny&quot;)</td>
<td>28, 29, 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Kimpton, Private Austin</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Henry</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Stephen</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>King Edward VII</td>
<td>28, 32, 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>King's South Africa Medal</td>
<td>description, 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mailer, Private James</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marquis of Tuilabarine (2nd Scottish Regiment)</td>
<td>33, 39, 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matthews, Trooper Charles</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McCaskill, Private Hugh</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McCulloch, William (Vicotorian Minister of Defence)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McLeish, Captain Duncan</td>
<td>3, 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McLeish, Colonel Duncan</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Merrett, Sergeant (Later Merrett, sir Charles Edward)</td>
<td>13, 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michel, Private Frederick</td>
<td>1, 2, 18, 22, 25, 27, 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Murray, Lieutenant-Colonel P. L.,</td>
<td>33, 54, 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Musketeers, The Three</td>
<td>1, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>O'Donoghue, Private John</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Palliser, George Robert</td>
<td>37, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palliser, Major William</td>
<td>37, 38, 64, 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patterson, Adjutant William</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patterson, Sergeant Charles</td>
<td>1, 2, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 30, 35, 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preston Rifle Club</td>
<td>2, 3, 20, 27, 30, 31, 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Price, Colonel Tom</td>
<td>3, 11, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prowse, Lance Corporal William</td>
<td>27, 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prowse, Sergeant Stephen</td>
<td>1, 2, 22, 26, 27, 28, 34, 35, 39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q
Queen's South Africa (description), 49

R
Reed, Private Harold, 23, 36
Rensburg Drift, 25, 27, 35
Ringrose, Trooper Thomas, 38
Rouse, Quarter-Master Sergeant William, 43
Rudduck, Veterinary Captain Harold, 33, 41
Ruffin, Private Walter, 41

S
Saultry, Private William (died), 35, 36
Second Battalion Australian Commonwealth Horse (Victorian Units), 53
Second Victorian Mounted Rifles, 27, 52
Sixth Battalion Australian Commonwealth Horse (Victorian Units), 49
Stacey, Sergeant Charles Tracey (killed), 38
Steele, Trooper James, 28
Stephens, Private Frank, 41
Stewart, Lieutenant Charles, 15, 27, 65
Sturdee, Dr Alfred, 48, 49, 50

T
Taylor, Lance Corporal George, 27, 28, 36
Templeton, Colonel J. M., 15, 21
Third Bushmen's Contingent, 52, 54
Thurgood, Private Alfred, 43

V
Victorian Military Contingent Act, 51

W
Wallace, Trooper John, 41
Weeding, Private Herbert, 43
West, Company Sergeant Major Thomas, 29, 36
White, Private Henry (died of illness on return), 42
Wickens, Trooper Arthur, 42
Wilmansrust, 28, 29, 32, 39
Witherington, Thomas J., 18, 19, 20