



## History and Heritage Series

### Colonel The Honourable Justin Fox Greenlaw FOXTON, CMG, VD (1849–1916)

Sources include:

- An article by DB Waterson published in the Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 8 (MUP) 1981
- *Evening Post* 1 October 1909 (Page 7)
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton



These Background Notes have been prepared as 'bite-sized' light reading for our Members. The intention is to broaden understanding of selected aspects of the Club's rich history and heritage, and the remarkable people who have contributed to its development over the years. They are based primarily on a number of websites, with specific additional information in places. We acknowledge that there are probably errors and omissions. Please contact the Club if you have additional information or comments that will assist to improve these notes.

The series will be progressively expanded and developed over time. They are intended as casual reading, for private use by Members only, and as they lack the rigor, attributions, and acknowledgements required to be suitable for academic or public use, Members are requested not to reproduce or distribute them outside of our membership.

**Colonel The Honourable Justin Fox Greenlaw FOXTON, CMG, VD  
(1849–1916)**



## **Introduction**

Colonel Justin Fox Greenlaw Foxtton CMG, VD was a politician, barrister, and a soldier. He played a key role in the birth of the Royal Australian Navy, as a politician representing Australia at the Imperial Conference in London in 1909.

He was also a member of the United Service Club's Foundation Committee in 1892, Chairman of Committee for many years from 1901, and was later made a Life Member of the Club.

## **Early Life**

He was born on 24 September 1849 in Melbourne, son of Captain John Greenlaw Foxtton (accountant and former naval officer) and his wife Isabel Elizabeth (née Potts). He was educated at Melbourne Church of England Grammar School.

In 1864 Justin moved to Queensland and after jackerooing was articled to J M Thompson of Ipswich, and was admitted to the Bar in 1871. He established a lucrative tinfeld practice in Stanthorpe in 1872 before moving to a Brisbane partnership with Thompson. He married Emily Mary Panton at Ipswich on 19 November 1874 and they raised a family of two sons and a daughter.

## **Military**

Foxtton served in the Militia as a field artillery officer for over thirty years, but did not see active service. He was for some time aide-de-camp to the Governor General of Australia.

'Colonel Foxtton made military history when he carried out an inspection of a full scale parade of the Field Artillery at Fort Lytton in 1900. His friend, James Trackson, who had recently imported the first motor car to Brisbane, a steam driven Locomobile, persuaded him to become the first reviewing officer to arrive by motor vehicle instead of the customary charger.

When this new contraption came huffing and puffing and rumbling onto the parade ground the effect was dramatic - particularly on the horses which drew the pieces of the Field Artillery. In the words of the *Brisbane Courier* reporter: "They snorted and shied and set off helter skelter - anywhere to get out of the reach of this mechanical menace. In a minute or two there was not a hoof on the camping ground".'

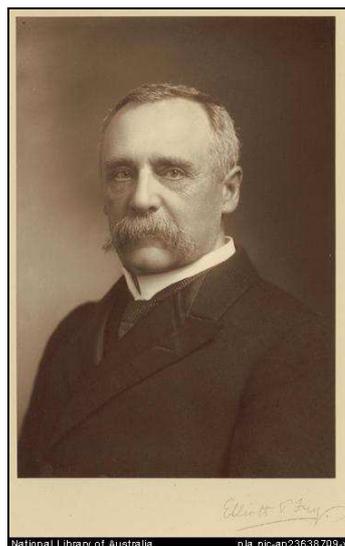
He ended his military career in 1912 as Commandant of the Queensland Brigade of the Field Artillery. He was appointed CMG (1903) and the Volunteer's Officers Decoration (VD).



Although he did not see battle there was no doubt of his personal bravery, he was courageous. In 1884 he was awarded the Royal Humane Society's certificate of merit for saving a woman from drowning at St Kilda pier, Melbourne and seven years later his attempt to rescue two sisters from the flooding Brisbane River gained him the society's bronze medal.

### **Politician**

Foxton served as a politician at both State and Commonwealth levels.



### **Queensland Government**

He held the Legislative Assembly seat of Carnarvon from 1883 until 1904. He served as Secretary for Public Lands in 1896-98 and again from April to September 1903. He was Home Secretary from October 1898 to April 1903.

When Lands Minister, Foxton consolidated the complex Queensland land laws in the Land Act of 1897. The two most significant pieces of Queensland legislation which he initiated were the Factories and Shops Act of 1900, and the 1901 Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act.

### Commonwealth Government

After being defeated in the State elections, he became Federal member for Brisbane in 1906-10. He was (minister without portfolio) for ten months in Deakin's third government (June 1909 to April 1910).

Colonel Foxton's role in the creation of the Australian fleet remains his greatest claim to remembrance. He represented Australia at the 1909 Imperial Defence Conference in London (together with Colonel W. T. Bridges and Captain W. R. Creswell) when the principle of a separate Australian unit within the Empire's projected Pacific Fleet was agreed.

Interestingly, at the conclusion of the conference he was farewelled from London at a luncheon at the United Service Club in Pall Mall on 30 September.

### **United Service Club**

Colonel Foxton's service to the Club included as a member of the United Service Club's Foundation Committee in 1892, Chairman of Committee for many years from 1901, and was later made a Life Member of the Club. He also delivered one of the Club's lectures in 1910, 'Evolution and Development of an Australian Naval Policy'.

He also assisted the Club when it was operating a somewhat creative scheme to circumvent liquor licensing laws. On one occasion the revenue officers arrived with a lorry [at our then Club House at 21 North Quay] and took away the whole of our liquor, under what they were pleased to call a warrant. Colonel The Honourable J F G Foxton was at that time our Chairman of Committee and also held the position of Home Secretary and on being informed of this seizure of liquor, he took immediate steps to have it returned which was done the day after its confiscation. A special general meeting of the members was called to deal with the matter of a licence.

A print of 'Scotland for Ever', depicting a charge at Waterloo, hangs in our hallway. The keen eye will detect (but only on close inspection) that it was presented by Colonel Foxton.

### **Conclusion**

Foxton's other interests included yachting and cricket and he served as president of the Queensland Cricket Association, chairman of trustees of the Brisbane Cricket Ground, and as a member of the Australian Board of Control at various times.

Colonel Foxton died at South Brisbane on 23 June 1916, and was buried in Toowong cemetery. He was survived by his wife, two sons serving in the AIF and a daughter.

Sources: This Note is based on information from various websites and:

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