



History and Heritage Series

The Club Honour Board 1914-1918

Sources include research by Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Akeroyd (Retd) and various websites



These Background Notes have been prepared as 'bite-sized' light reading for our Members. The intention is to broaden awareness and 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.**

We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared 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.

Introduction

The Club's 1914-1918 Honour Board is located near our main entrance, and sadly, seems to rate barely a glance these days. It commemorates the 22 Club Members who did not return from the Great War. Their loss was once keenly felt throughout the Club, especially as the membership was much smaller and most Members knew, and perhaps had served with, these Members.

The purpose of this Note is to tell the story of this Honour Board itself, ie as a work of art.

Exhaustive research by one of our Members, Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Akeroyd (Retd), to trace and record the details and to source a quality photograph of each of these men has enabled their stories to be compiled into a separate Note within in this series that tells the story of each of the men behind the names on the Honour Board. It is titled (File name *People. Honour Roll. Great War*)

A brief overview is appropriate here to place the significance of the Honour Board in context. The 22 Club Members who did not return from the Great War were all young men; the youngest was only 22 and the oldest was 47 years of age:

- 10 were in their twenties;
- 10 were in their thirties; and
- two were in their forties.

They are buried, or commemorated on Memorials, near where they were killed or died:

- 12 are still on the Gallipoli peninsular;
- eight are still on the Western Front;
- one lies at Beersheeba;
- one was lost at sea in the Russian lakes near Archangel.

The Story of the 1914-1918 Honour Board

The 1914-1918 Honour Board records the names of the Club Members, who were killed in The Great War. It was:

- designed by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Pye;
- carved from Queensland Maple by Mr. Hedley G. Smith, of South Brisbane; and
- unveiled on 13 Aug 1924 by the Governor of Queensland, The Right Honourable Lieutenant Colonel Sir Matthew Nathan.



The Design

The central feature of the memorial is a tablet upon which is carved in raised letters the names, rank, and post-nominals of those Members of the Club who were killed during the Great War. On the upper part over the names, are the words, *Our Fallen Comrades. Their name liveth for evermore, 1914-1918.* whilst under the names is the Club's motto: *Pro Aris et Focis* (meaning *For Our Altars and Firesides* but usually more broadly interpreted as: *for God and Country, or for Hearth and Home*).

Design Symbolism

The remaining portion of the design is allegorical:

- at the top centre of the AIF emblem (the *Rising Sun* badge) is shown as rising over the sea which every soldier and sailor of Australia had to cross to fight for his country;
- supporting the centre at each side is an angelic figure represented in the act of removing the sword of strife and replacing it with the laurel wreath of peace and honour;
- at the feet of these figures is a conventional growth of foliage, typifying the restoration of prosperity to the nation by the sacrifice of its heroes.

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Pye

The design was prepared by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Pye and the memorial was carved in Queensland maple by Mr. Hedley G. Smith, of South Brisbane. We do not have any information about Mr Smith, but we do have some details of Lieutenant Colonel Pye, thanks to Christopher Akeroyd's research.

The Club's history mentions Thomas Pye in three places:

- Foundation Member, architect, and President in 1919;
- As a captain presenting to club members a lecture in 1909 on 'Field Fortifications' (a report on the lecture is at <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/19590286>); and
- The designer of the Honour Board.

Pye was born in 1862, and was appointed a lieutenant in the Militia in 1906. A couple of years later he was promoted to captain and by 1913 was a lieutenant colonel. For many years he was very prominent in rifle club circles and was appointed shooting-captain of the Australian team to Bisley in 1910. Between 1908 and 1913 he served in the Intelligence Corps.

His age would have ruled against any desire he may have had to join the AIF. His rank and experience however saw a special role found for him and he appointed to the AIF in 1915 in the rank of lieutenant colonel to perform duties as a Sea Transport Officer. His appointment as STS officer could have been a legitimate device to enable him to 'do his bit' for the war effort¹.

An article in the Brisbane Courier Mail on Thursday 3 April 1930 reports his death in Africa:

News has been received from Africa of the death of Colonel Thomas Pye, formerly Queensland Government architect.

The late Colonel Thomas Pye arrived in Brisbane in 1884 under engagement to the late Mr. J. J. Clark, architect. He joined the staff of the Department of Public Works on May 9, 1884, and was associated with the preparation of the plans for the first and second sections of the Treasury Building - those facing William Street and the Queen's Gardens, respectively. This was only a temporary engagement. His appointment as a permanent draughtsman was made on December 5, 1889. Mr. Pye became chief draughtsman of the department on October 1, 1891, and was appointed first assistant architect on July 1, 1889, and 18 months later district architect for the southern division of the State.

On September 27, 1906, Mr. Pye was appointed joint deputy Government Architect and Acting Under Secretary, and continued in that office until his retirement on August 31, 1921. He served 33 years and three months with the Department of Public Works.

The late Colonel Pye was a military censor in Queensland for about five months in 1914 and in September 1915 as a lieutenant-colonel, he was detailed to command Australian Imperial Forces reinforcements on transports. He took a keen interest in rifle shooting and was a prominent member of local rifle clubs.

Given that there was no-one else with the same rank and name associated with the earliest manifestation as the United Service Club 1892 and with drawing skills and professional qualifications as a soldier and architect, it seems highly likely that the man who died in Africa in 1930 of Black Water Fever was the man who designed the Honour Board.

¹ He has a digitised file in The National Archives of Australia on his WW I service [bar code 8020918]. He has another un-digitised file on his military service [bar code 9094905] ie his non-AIF service. It could be digitised on payment of a fee. There is no other Thomas Pye of the rank of lieutenant colonel in the NAA collection and no other T. Pye who is associated Queensland who was an architect.

The Unveiling

The Honour Board was unveiled on 13 Aug 1924 by the Governor of Queensland, His Excellency The Right Honourable Lieutenant Colonel Sir Matthew Nathan.

The following is an extract from a report in *The Brisbane Courier* on Thursday 14 August 1924:

The beautifully designed memorial and honour board of the United Service Club was unveiled by his Excellency the Governor (Sir Matthew Nathan) last evening, in the presence of a large attendance of club members. The Governor was attended by Captain Saunders MC, and others present included Major General J. H. Bruche, Lieutenant Colonel Durant, Major D. E. Evans (President of the Club), Captain J. Francis MHR, Commander Pope RN, Brigadier General J. H. Cannan², and General Wilson.

In unveiling the memorial, to the sounds of the Last Post, sounded by Sergeant Barnes, the Governor said that there was no place more fitting for a memorial to men who had given their lives in the execution of their duty in one or other of the united services than that in which men of those services habitually met each other in pleasant intercourse and talked over their common interests of to-day and their common recollections of the days that were gone.....

....To those who were their friends it will speak in terms of inspiring but bitter sweet reminiscence. To the new members it should tell of the spirit with which they should carry out the service they owe to their country."

(A transcript of the article that contains the His Excellency's full speech is at <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/20742037>)

Conclusion

Next time you pass the 1914-1918 Honour Board, please take a moment to appreciate its beauty and reflect on its story and meaning. It has become somewhat invisible over the years but the Honour Board, and more particularly the names recorded on it, deserve better especially during the years of the centenary of the Great War.

² Later Major General J H Cannan and brother of one of the men recorded on the Honour Board. He was also active in other areas post-war, including founding Legacy Queensland. His portrait has been returned to the Club recently, after an absence of about ten years, and is again hanging in our Reading Room.