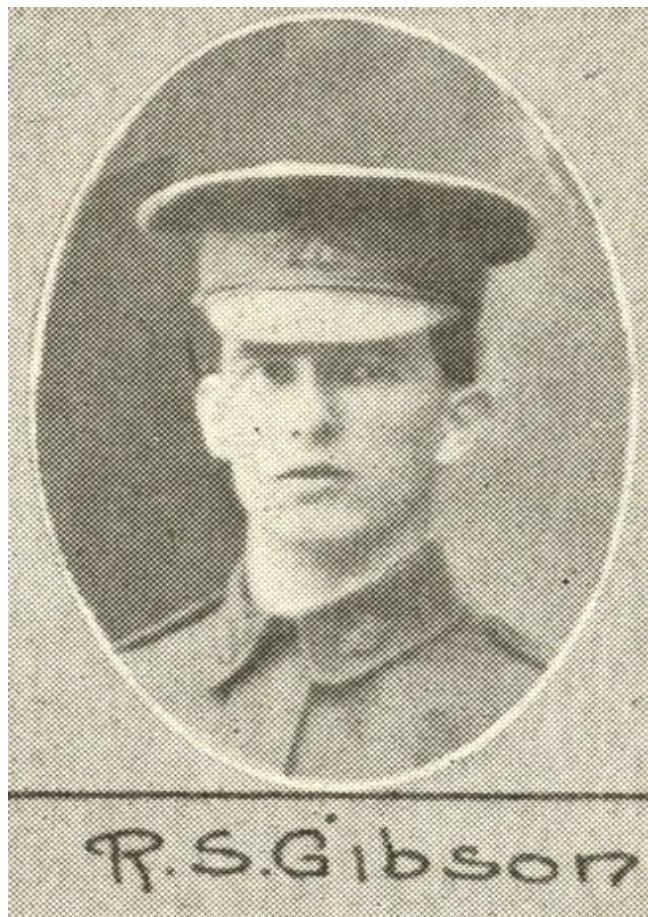


# Stories from the Honour Boards

Stories of those who served and are remembered on the Honour Boards in  
the Merrington Anzac Memorial Peace Chapel at Saint Andrew's Uniting Church

Booklet Number 156

## **ROBERT SELBY GIBSON 1892 - 1964**



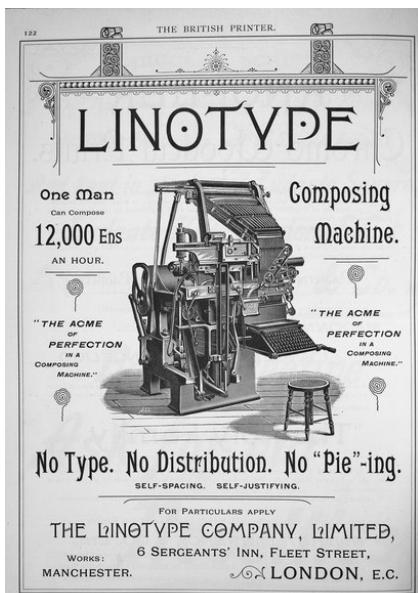
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2017

## Private Robert Selby Gibson

Robert Selby Gibson was born in Stockton-on-Tees, Durham, England in 1892, second son of John Robert and Catherine née Selby. The Gibson family lived at 42 Durham Street, Stockton-on-Tees at the time of the 1911 census. His father, then aged 43, was Inspector of Water Fittings in the Tees Valley Water Board. Robert's siblings were an older brother John Thomas and younger sister Elsie. Robert Selby Gibson was an apprentice printer. In 1912 when Robert was 19, he came with his family to Australia on the Steamship *Rimutaka*, arriving in Brisbane on 26 March. They lived at first at Sandgate then South Brisbane where Mr Gibson kept a shop. The Gibson family were members of Wharf Street Congregational Church. They later moved to Manly and Mr JR Gibson joined the staff of the Brisbane City Council. Mr and Mrs Gibson celebrated their golden wedding at the Hotel Canberra on the corner of Edward and Ann Streets on 25 May 1940 when their three children and 11 grandchildren were present.

Robert Selby Gibson found work in the printing trade in Toowoomba where he became an operator on the linotype staff of the *Darling Downs Gazette*.



*Linotype machines such as this were in use in Queensland in the early twentieth century*



Private Gibson spent Christmas and New Year at the Machine Gun Depot at Seymour Victoria before embarking from the Port of Melbourne on board HMAT<sup>1</sup> *Ballarat* on 19 February 1917 bound for Devonport, Southern England. His unit undertook further training at Hurdcott before joining 11<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Company at Camiers in France on 5 August 1917.



*Machine Gunners*

In the Great War machine guns proved fearsome defensive weapons. Sometimes they were established in fixed strong-points covering potential enemy attack routes. Enemy infantry assaults upon such positions invariably proved highly costly on both sides. Under such dangerous conditions Private Robert Gibson survived the remaining months of 1917. 1918 was also difficult. For failing to salute an officer in January he was awarded seven days' FP No 2;<sup>2</sup> he was admitted and discharged from hospital several times and for a variety of illnesses; in June he was wounded in action suffering gunshot wounds to the neck but remained on duty; treatment at a number of field ambulance locations and hospitals in France was required for an abscess on the knee during the month of August. At the times he was fit for duty he would rejoin his unit on the battlefield.

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1. His Majesty's Australian Transport

2. Field Punishment could be awarded by a court martial or a commanding officer for an offence committed on active service. There were two categories of field punishment. No 1 consisted of heavy labouring duties possibly being restrained in handcuffs or fetters and being tied to a post or wheel. Field Punishment No 2 differed in that the offender was not liable to be attached to a fixed object.

He was troubled again with illness in 1919. His wife received a letter reporting Private RS Gibson had been admitted to Queen Alexandra's Military Hospital, Millbank, London on 28 March, suffering from inflammation of the lymph glands of the groin and that the condition was severe. After discharge from hospital he was granted furlough in England before returning to Codford to prepare for return to Australia. He forfeited a day's pay as well as being admonished for an AWL offence on 28 April 1919. On the return voyage on board the steamship *Zealandia* in May 1919 Private Robert Gibson was in the ship's hospital for a period of seven days with a septic leg. The war experience for Australian soldiers could be horrific and costly and unhappy. Robert Selby Gibson's war service certainly was.

At home at last, Robert Gibson began adjusting to civilian life. While he was away at the war, his wife Winifred gave birth to their first child, Royden Robert and she moved from Toowoomba to Hurdworth Cottage, Louisa Street, Highgate Hill. Robert Gibson resumed his work as a linotype operator. The family lived for short periods at Dan Street Graceville and Bell Street Enoggera before settling at Mott Street, Gaythorne where by 1943 their adult children were also employed - Royden Robert electrical mechanic, Mona Winifred typist, Maureen Lenore dressmaker and Jean Selby clerk.

Throughout the 1950s Robert Selby Gibson lived with the Sweatman family in Rainworth and later in Toowong while he continued his career in the printing industry. In retirement he lived at Ward Street, Sandgate and died on 19 November 1964, aged 72.

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*Darling Downs Gazette*, 25 November 1916, page 3  
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Brisbane  
January 2017



*Lest we forget*