

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 140

JOHN LOOSEMORE 1875 - 1948



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Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.



*William and Ann Loosemore with the first
5 of their 14 children.*

(SLQ)

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Corner Ann and Creek Streets
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2016

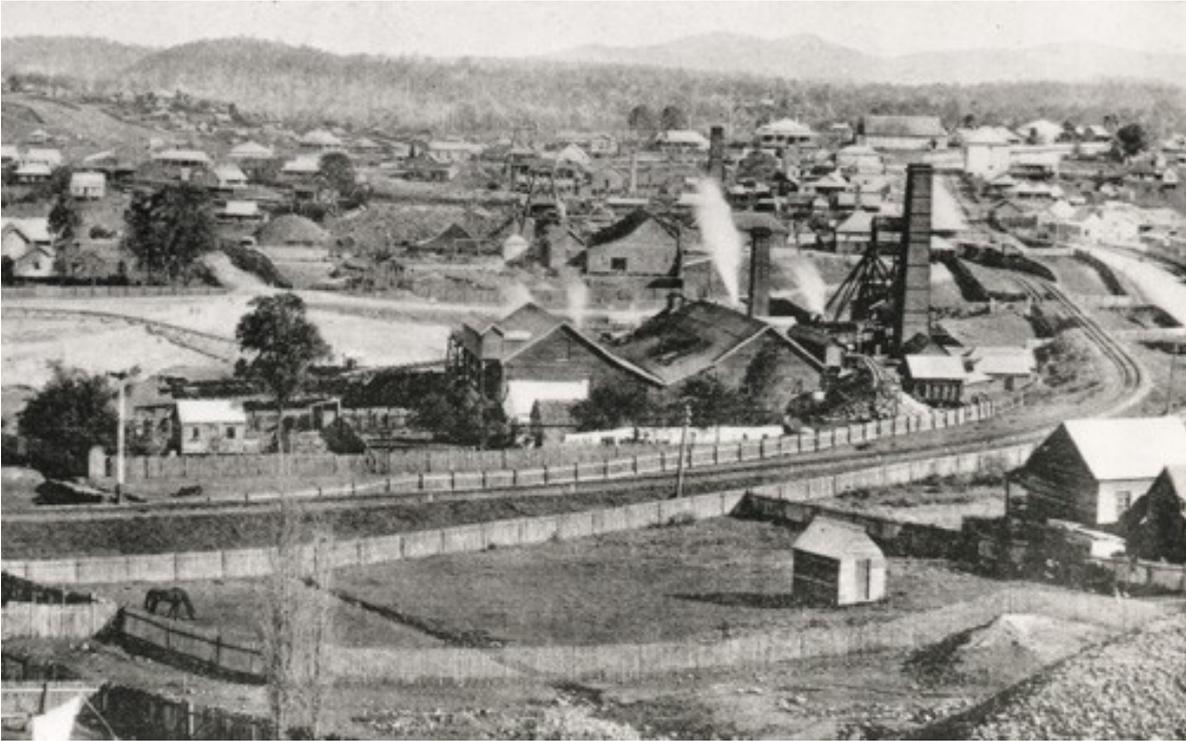
Sapper John Loosemore

From mining in his father's gold mine in Gympie to preparing for the huge Hill 60 explosion in Belgium, reportedly heard in London, is the story of Sapper John Loosemore. Life in the Gympie home of the Loosemore family in the last decades of the 19th century with their 14 children must have been crowded and beyond our understanding. The children were born over a period of 26 years while the family lived at Inglewood Hill.

William Henry Loosemore was born at Tiverton, Devon, England in 1842. In July 1866, at the age of 24, he emigrated to Brisbane on the ship *Queen of the Colonies* the journey taking 76 days. William Henry was one of the people elected by the other passengers to be on the passenger committee to represent them during the voyage. An earlier voyage of *Queen of the Colonies* in April 1863 ended with the shipwreck of a small boat sent ashore to bury a woman passenger who had expressed a strong wish not to be buried at sea. There is a monument commemorating this at Moffat Beach.

William Henry soon joined the Gympie gold rush which began in 1867, and became a gold miner. He married Ann Duncan Auchterlonie of Parramatta in 1873, when he was aged 31 and Ann was just 17.

In a booklet published for Gympie's jubilee in 1917 (later reprinted in 1927 and 1967), WH Loosemore and A Auchterlonie were mentioned in a list of shareholders who received a huge dividend in 1884, when their gold mining company "Wilmot Extended" struck a rich patch of gold with so much visible gold in the rock it was called "a jeweller's shop".



Gold mining in Gympie. c1903

A Auchterlonie is probably Ann's brother Archibald who also lived with his family at Inglewood Hill, Gympie. John was born on 10 September 1875, the second child of William Henry and his wife Ann.

John married Clara Naomi Gerler in July 1906 although the marriage was not registered until 1908. In the 1912 census he was shown as a gold miner. In 1916 when John enlisted he gave his address as Mark Street, New Farm and his occupation as assistant foreman. While he allocated 2/3 of his pay to the support of his wife and children, there is no reference to any children.

When John enlisted, he was 40 years of age. He was 176cm tall and weighted 59kg. He was fair with blue eyes and his photo shows that he sported a large moustache. He gave his religion as Presbyterian and named his wife Clara as his next of kin. Two of John's brothers Thomas and William Alfred also enlisted and his sister Mary Ann served as a Staff Nurse.

John trained in the Camp at Enoggera from March to May before moving first to the Miners' Depot for further instruction and then to the Miners' Training Camp at Seymour Victoria. He was promoted to Lance Corporal but before embarkation in September 1916 reverted to Sapper.

With 167 others he left Melbourne as the third reinforcements to the Tunnelling Companies on HMAT *Suffolk* which, after calling at Fremantle, next called at Capetown and then Dakar in West Africa where she stayed for 5 days. Finally after just over two months at sea they reached Plymouth and underwent further training at Perham Downs.

The reinforcements sailed from Folkestone for France on 1 January 1917 on the SS *Arundel*. Sapper Loosemore was assigned to the 1st Anzac Entrenching Battalion a section of the Base Depot, to accustom the reinforcements to conditions they would experience in the field. He joined the 1st Tunnelling Company where his experience in the mining industry was valued as he went into action at Hill 60.



Miners of the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company excavating dug-outs at Hill 60.

Keith Murdoch wrote of the Australian Tunnellers

“Through wet and fine, through shellfire, and in choking caverns beneath the ground, the tunnellers stick to work saving thousands of lives of their brother infantrymen, and doing their bit towards blasting the curse of the German Army from the world. A finer set of men you will not hope to meet. Tall lantern jawed, with deep-set eyes, and the confident look of the muscular Australian countryman, they made a great picture on parade today, in full fighting accoutrements, on the occasion of an inspection ...”



The Memorial to the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company at Hill 60.



John was off sick for 6 days in March for treatment of dental caries and was in hospital again on 2 April. Later that month it was mumps and in September a Medical Board declared him PU (permanently unfit) and he left London on HT *Themistocles* in November 1917 for discharge on 17 February 1918 due to 'disordered action of the heart'. Some references mention trench foot and another his being gassed.

He was granted a pension of £2 5s (\$4.50) a fortnight and his wife Clara £1/2/6.(\$2.25)

John was awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. John and Clara lived in Victoria Parade, Woolloowin from 1925.

John died at Currumbin Beach on April 23 1948 and was privately cremated the following day at Mt Thompson Crematorium.

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Brisbane
November 2016



Lest we forget