

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 150

ALBERT REES

1887 - 1971



The ACMF badge carved in the chalk at Fovant, probably in 1917

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Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.

Cover Illustration: *Australian troops occupied a large part of Fovant Camp in Wiltshire. Badges of many different units were carved into the adjoining hillsides. These badges are currently being restored.*

Albert Rees was stationed at Fovant in 1917 and 1918.



The Fovant Badges on the Chalk Downs of Wiltshire at the present time

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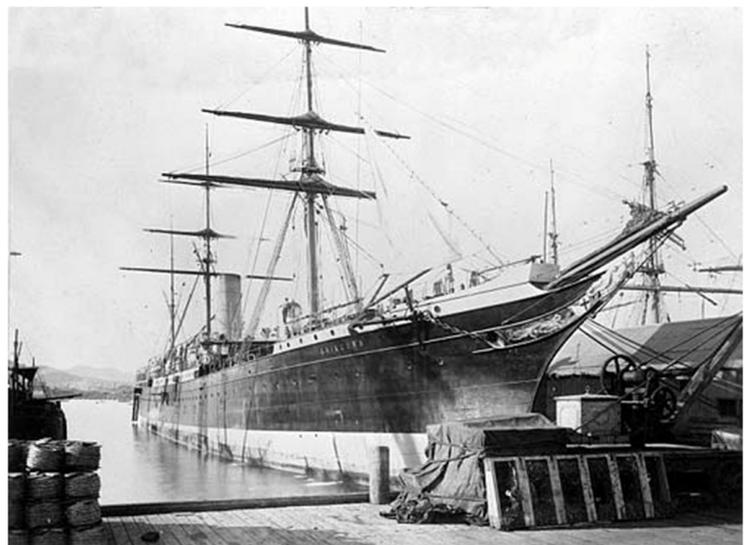
Sergeant Albert Rees

Albert Rees, whose name appears on one of the Congregational Honour Boards in the Merrington Anzac Memorial Peace Chapel in Saint Andrew's Uniting Church, Ann Street, Brisbane was born in Glamorganshire, South Wales in 1887. His parents were Robert Henry and Mary Ann (Mary Ann already had four children when they married). Together they had Albert and Oliver. Robert was a coal miner.

The 1901 census showed that Albert lived in Bristol. Prior to arriving in Australia he had served in the Bristol Rifle Volunteers for three years.

The Volunteers received practically no support from the government and the officers and men had to provide their own equipment and uniforms, as well as drill halls and rifle ranges, arms and ammunition. Uniforms were gaudy, reviews and field days were major social events and enthusiasm and patriotism carried the Volunteers along!

On 8 May 1911, Albert aged about 24, sailed from London on the *Kaipara* arriving in Brisbane on 21 June 1911. The passenger list described him as a navy.



When Albert became engaged to Caroline Trout on 20 August 1913, he was YMCA Camp Secretary in Brisbane.

The Brisbane YMCA had responded quickly to the outbreak of war in August 1914. It was reported that 'On every troopship which had left Brisbane the association had put on board stationery, games, reading matter and other material and for a large portion of the year six paid secretaries had been engaged in this (soldiers, sailors, railway camps) work'.

The YMCA was one of three official organisations to accompany troops overseas. Soldiers commented that the YMCA man was the last person they saw before going over the top and the first one they saw coming back. They already had a presence in the Redbank camp, having moved from Lytton in 1913. Within months a war secretary had gone overseas with the troops. The camp at Enoggera had three marquees for YMCA work. There was a library, continually restocked with magazines and newspapers, recreational facilities, and the men could write letters on the stationery provided. There were also concerts, picture shows and receptions at the camp and in Brisbane, and lectures, Bible classes and evangelical meetings.

A building was put up on North Quay, next to the Victoria Bridge, known as "The Hut" and opened in November 1917. It provided soldiers with short term accommodation, meals, a library and recreational facilities.

On 5 November 1914, in Gympie, Albert married Caroline who was born in 1890. His attestation form shows that he had one child, Robert John who was born in Gympie on 24 August 1916. Robert Rees served on HMAS *Sydney* in World War II and was killed in action when the *Sydney* was sunk off Western Australia on 20 November 1941. His name is listed on the Wall of Remembrance that is part of the HMAS Sydney II Memorial at Geraldton.



HMAS Sydney II Memorial at Geraldton.

Albert and Caroline's daughter Daphne was born in 1925. They lived at Lagoon Pocket Station in the Mary Valley where Albert was a farmer.



Daphne and Robert
(undated)

He enlisted in Brisbane on 12 October 1916 in the 7/41st Battalion declaring his religion as Church of England. At enlistment Albert was 165cm tall, weighed 54kg. and was given the number 3131. Prior to embarking on the *Wiltshire* on 7 February 1917 he attended NCO school. The *Wiltshire* docked at Devonport a district of Plymouth on 11 April 1917.

On 24 April he was admitted to Sidmouth Hospital. On 25 April he was detached for duty with No 1 Camp Isolation Hospital, Fovant. The Fovant camp housed 20 000 men in prefab wooden huts with corrugated iron cladding and roofs, with a wood burning stove in the centre and about 30 men per hut.

In November 1917 Albert joined the staff of the 3rd Training Brigade, based at Codford. He remained there until May 1918 when he was transferred to the AIF canteens component - for which his YMCA experience was no doubt very relevant - in the Headquarters for AIF depots in the UK.

Albert was promoted to Corporal 12 August 1918, to Sergeant in October, and to Staff Sergeant in November of the same year. He became temporary Quarter-Master Sergeant in January 1919, but relinquished this post when he became seriously ill with influenza in March. He was treated in the Fulham Hospital and then the 3rd Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford from 6 May 1919.

On 28 August a War Office Communique advised that he had been 'brought to the notice of the Secretary of State for War for invaluable services rendered in connection with the war.' He was awarded the 1914 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

On 1 November 1919 he returned to Australia on the *Nestor* as Sergeant and was discharged on 2 February 1920 and lived at Haystack Flat, Imbil Road, Lagoon Pocket, Mary Valley Line.

After his war service, Albert was a salesman in Brisbane. In 1925, the electoral roll gave their address as Merthyr and Bailey Road in New Farm. Caroline died in 1967, and Albert in 1971.

Reference List

Ancestry.com

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Lest we forget