



Colonel The Honourable Justin Fox Greenlaw FOXTON, CMG, VD

[1849–1916]



Colonel Foxtton was elected to Life Membership of the Club in 1899(?)

Colonel (then Major) Foxtton was a Foundation Member of the Club.

Colonel Foxtton was a Trustee of the Club in 1914.

Colonel Foxtton 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, and Chairman of Committee for many years from 1901.

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.

We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.

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In 1864 Justin moved to Queensland and, after jackerooing, was articled to solicitor J M Thompson of Ipswich, and was admitted to the Bar in 1871. He established a lucrative tin field 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.

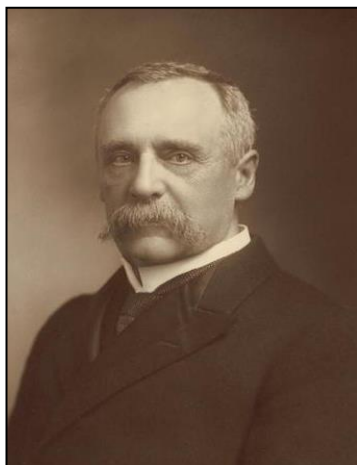
Foxton served in the Militia as a field artillery officer for over thirty years, but did not see active service. He was for some time aide-de-camp to the Governor General of Australia.

Colonel Foxton 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 awarded the Volunteer 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.



Foxton served as a politician at both state and commonwealth levels.

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 other 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.

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.

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. He also delivered one of the Club's lectures in 1910, 'Evolution and Development of an Australian Naval Policy'.

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 include:

- various websites
- 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
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents

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