

Anglian Boat Club and the First World War

Anglian Boat Club was founded in 1878 and, for many years, did not aspire to top level racing. Although it occasionally sent an eight to Henley, its more talented members usually went on to London or Thames, often achieving great things. However, around 1908 a group of oarsmen got together who formed the core of Anglian's success which lasted until the outbreak of the First World War.

1909 was a particularly good season when the Club won several senior eights events including Thames Cup at Molesey and also boated a junior eight at several regattas*. 1910 saw the first eight win Thames Cup at Henley and in subsequent seasons there were victories in many other senior and Thames Cup events. In 1914 there were further triumphs for the first eight and the juniors. Four of the first eight also twice won senior fours. Their final appearance was at Reading Regatta, on the bank holiday weekend when Britain went to war with Germany, where they made their only attempt at Grand Eights.

It would seem that most of the active oarsmen served in the forces and there are indications that many of them initially joined the Artists' Rifles, possibly as Territorials before the outbreak of the war. There was certainly a connection between this regiment and the club after the war and we still have an Artists' Rifles Cup amongst our trophies. The Artists' Rifles were an officer's training battalion as well as a fighting unit and most men who started the war with them subsequently transferred to other units.

When rowing commenced again after the war only a few of the pre-war oarsmen returned and the club never repeated its earlier successes. However, unlike some other less fortunate clubs, Anglian did continue although at a much less ambitious level. So, what happened to the men of Anglian who achieved so much between 1908 and 1914?

Firstly, six of these men were killed during the war. Amongst them were two of the 1910 Henley eight, Maurice Gardener who died in a flying accident in 1915, shortly after being commissioned into the Royal Flying Corps, and Joseph Green who was killed in a tank at the battle of Cambrai in 1917. Basil Thomas, who won his juniors in 1914 and then went on to stroke the first eight, was killed when second in command of a machine gun company in 1917, (and is one of the few Anglian men to have his obituary published in the *Times*). Ainsley Tytheridge, who was not amongst the six recorded on the Anglian war memorial, won his first race for the club at Marlow in 1903 went on to be captain in 1905 and first eight coach in 1909. He was killed in an accident shortly after the end of the war whilst serving as a regimental sergeant major in the Canadian Medical Corps. He had also served in the Boer War earlier in the century.

Most of the Anglian men served as officers in various arms and theatres of war, several of them being awarded the military cross. Kenneth Grierson, a cox'n from 1912 until 1914, served throughout the war, winning an MC on the Western front and subsequently a DSO in Italy. He was sent with the British Military Mission to Russia to assist the White Russians, where he caught typhus, finally leaving the army in 1926. He rejoined in 1939, attained the rank of colonel, but died of lung cancer in 1945 and is buried in Mortlake

* Up until the 1970s "senior" and "junior" were nothing to do with the age of a crew, but its status. Similar, but not exactly equivalent to the current system of "senior", "IM1", "IM2" etc.

Cemetery. Harold Lutt, a member of the club since 1896, served in the Royal Navy as a paymaster, seeing action at the battle of the Falklands and the Dardanelles. John Gwinnell, a pre-war member, served throughout the war in the Royal Fusiliers and became club captain in 1921. He then left England and in 1923 he was living in the Far East and rowing with the Royal Singapore Yacht Club. By 1931 he was a vice president of Anglian, but continued to live in Singapore. In the Second World War he commanded the Singapore Army Service Corps and was captured by the Japanese. Whilst a prisoner of war he worked on the infamous Burma Railway, but survived to return to Singapore, dying in 1959, aged 65. Others saw service with the infantry, artillery and engineers.

Only a few of those who were active in the club in 1914 returned after the end of the war and of those who did return, none rowed competitively in open regattas again although several were still associated as vice-presidents. It is not known whether any of the survivors were wounded or suffered from ill health as a result of their war time service, but in any case, they were all four years older and rowing was probably not amongst their priorities when reconstructing their lives. The *Times* of the 12th June 1919 noted:

“At Chiswick the Anglian Boat Club at Strand-on-the-Green and the Ibis Rowing Club at Grove Park are finding it difficult to raise crews of anything like the old standard, owing to the loss of a number of good oarsmen in the war. Anglian lost a particularly promising oarsman in B.L.B.Thomas, who stroked the eight in 1914.”

Amongst those who did return, Kenneth Wilson who served as joint captain in 1919, went on to join Thames RC, winning the Wyfolds, Thames Cup and the Grand at Henley, under the coaching of Steve Fairbairn. He was joined at Thames by Charles Rew, club secretary after the war, whose father was an early Anglian member. Harold Lutt, who had seen service in the Royal Navy, joined London RC and subsequently became an eminent chartered accountant.

Anglian, who had improved so much in the years leading up to the war, never recovered their position and, although competing regularly, success at the previous level was elusive. In 1929 a war memorial to the six members who had lost their lives was unveiled in their boathouse at Strand on the Green. No doubt there were others who served in the forces or undertook war related work, but their records have not yet been located. Some members, such as Arthur Piggott, Geoffrey Carr and B.C Fisher, were prominent before the war and continued their membership of Anglian for many years.

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Brief Details of Known Military Service of Anglian Members, (with their wins at open regattas)

Names on the Anglian War Memorial, 1928:

John Frederick Rew

2nd Lt. Devonshire Regiment, killed on the Somme, 1916
1914, Junior Eights, Marlow; Old Barnes Cup, Metropolitan; Thames Cup Eights, Molesey.

Basil Llewelyn Thomas

2nd Lt. Machine Gun Corps, killed 1917
1914, Junior Eights, Marlow; Old Barnes Cup, Metropolitan; Thames Cup Eights, Molesey.

George Schofield, (name changed from Schoenfeld)

Private, City of London Yeomanry, killed 1914

Maurice Leigh Gardner

2nd Lt. Royal Flying Corps, killed in an accident shortly after being commissioned, 1915
1909 Junior Fours, Reading.
1910 Thames Cup, Henley Royal Regatta; Challenge Eights, Marlow.
1911 Senior Eights, Walton.

Joseph George Green

2nd Lt. Machine Gun Corps, killed in a tank at Cambrai, 1917
1908 Junior Fours and Junior-senior eights, Reading; Junior-senior Eights, Goring & Streatley.
1909 Walton Eights; Coronation Cup Eights, Kingston; Thames Cup Eights, Molesey.
1910 Thames Cup, Henley Royal Regatta; Challenge Eights, Marlow.
1911 Senior Eights, Walton.
1912 Thames Cup Eights, Molesey; Coronation Cup Eights, Kingston.
1914 Old Barnes Cup, Metropolitan; Thames Cup Eights, Molesey, Senior Fours, Goring & Streatley.

H.G.Hill

Nothing known about this man, at present.

Not shown on the memorial:

Ainsley Burton Tytheridge

Regimental sergeant major, Canadian Army Medical Corps, died following an accident, in England shortly after the armistice.
1903 Junior Fours, Marlow.
1905 Junior-senior fours, Goring & Streatley.
1905 Club captain.

Others known to have served in the forces:

Howard Fussell

Captain, Gloucestershire Regiment. Military Cross.
1912 Thames Cup Eights, Molesey; Coronation Cup Eights, Kingston.
1914 Old Barnes Cup, Metropolitan; Thames Cup Eights, Molesey,
Senior Fours, Goring & Streatley.
Returned to the club. Joint captain 1919.

Kenneth Grierson

Artists' Rifles, then Captain, Manchester Regiment. Military Cross and
Distinguished Service Order.
Continued in the army after the war and did not return to the club.

John Gwinnell

Artists Rifles, then Captain Royal Fusiliers. Military Cross.
1914 Junior Eights, Marlow.
Returned to the club. Captain in 1920/22. Emigrated to Singapore
c.1927.

Bertram Hards

Emigrated to Canada, 1904.
Major, Canadian Grenadier Guards.

Francis Higgin

Captain, Royal Engineers.
Returned and raced in club events until 1927.

Oliver Imray

2nd Lieutenant, interpreter.
Returned to the club. Vice president in 1928.

Harold Lutt

2nd lieutenant, Royal Naval Reserve. Assistant paymaster, HMS Caesar.
1903 Senior-junior Fours, Marlow.
1907 Junior Sculls, Metropolitan.
Joined London RC after the war.

Pierre Miroy

Captain, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, Royal Naval Air Service.
1909 Walton Eights; Coronation Cup Eights, Kingston; Thames Cup
Eights, Molesey.
1910 Thames Cup Eights, Henley Royal Regatta.
1911 Thames Cup Eights, Walton.
1912 Coronation Cup Eights, Kingston.
1914 Old Barnes Cup, Metropolitan; Thames Cup Eights, Molesey,
Senior Fours, Goring & Streatley.
Returned and rowed in club races. Vice president in 1928.

George Penfold

2nd Lieutenant, Royal Field Artillery. Military Cross.
1908 Junior Fours and Junior-senior Eights, Kingston; Junior-senior Eights, Goring & Streatley.
1909 Walton Eights; Coronation Cup Eights, Kingston; Thames Cup Eights, Molesey.
1910 Thames Cup Eights, Henley Royal Regatta.
1911 Senior Eights, Walton.
1912 Thames Cup Eights, Molesey, Coronation Cup Eights, Kingston.
Seems to have stopped rowing after 1912.

Arthur Piggott

Lieutenant, King Edwards Horse.
Rowed briefly for Anglian in the early 1900s.

Maurice Piggott

Artists' Rifles?
1908 Junior Senior Eights, Kingston.
1909 Walton Eights; Coronation Cup Eights, Kingston; Thames Cup Eights, Molesey.
1910 Thames Cup Eights, Henley Royal Regatta; Challenge Eights, Marlow.
1911 Senior Eights, Walton.
1912 Thames Cup Eights, Molesey, Coronation Cup Eights, Kingston.
1914 Old Barnes Cup, Metropolitan; Thames Cup Eights, Molesey, Senior Fours, Goring & Streatley.
Returned and rowed in club races until 1922.

Charles Rew

Gunner, Royal Field Artillery.
Son of Harry and brother of John, both of whom rowed for Anglian.
Rowed for the club, and secretary in 1919. Joined Thames RC, where he won Wyfolds, Thames Cup and the Grand at Henley and rowed in the 1924 Olympics in Paris.

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