

# Engineer Sub-Lieutenant Hugh John Gay Nicholson



**Played with Adelaide University** 



Football Club: 1913 & 1914 (B & A Grade)

(Intervarsity 1913)

**Cricket Club: 1915/1916 (A Grade)** 

Degree: BE (1916), FDip EEng (1916)

# **Background**

Coinciding with the Centenary of Anzacs our incentive behind the series of biographical publications is the Adelaide University Football and Cricket Club's desire to honour our players who served in the Great War (1914 - 1918). These brave men put on hold their academic, professional and sporting careers for King and Country in the name of peace and freedom. The AUFC/AUCC WW1 Memorial Committee is endeavouring to identify every one of our players who served and prepare life stories on all. This is to ensure their sacrifices and further contributions to society will be recognised by future generations.

On Anzac Day 2015, the Centenary of the Gallipoli landing, a memorial plaque was unveiled on the Adelaide University Oval Pavilion and this was followed by the erection of a picket fence between the pavilion and the scoreboard with each picket bearing a plaque with the name of an AUFC/AUCC player who served.

The following documentation relates to the life of Hugh John Gay Nicholson. It is compilation of information and photographs collected from a variety of historical sources.

AUFC/AUCC WW1 MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

## **Service Record - AIF**

 $\underline{https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=7995368}$ 

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## **Service Record - Navy**

 $\underline{https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=5220743}$ 

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#### **RSL Virtual War Memorial**

https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/796795

#### **NICHOLSON, Hugh John Gay**

Service

Officer

Number: Enlisted:

2 March 1917, Adelaide, South Australia

Last Rank:

**Sub Lieutenant** 

Last Unit:

**HMAS Cerberus** 

Born:

Unley, South Australia, 16 September 1895

Schooling:

University of Adelaide

Occupation:

Engineer

Died:

17 June 1972, aged 76 years, cause of death not yet discovered, place of death not yet discovered

C-----

Centennial Park - South Australian Garden of Remembrance

Cemetery:

RSL, Wall 105, Niche B004

Memorials:

Adelaide HB17 SA Caledonian Society WW 1 ANZAC House\*, University of Adelaide WW1 Honour

Roll Mitchell Bldg\*, Unley HB01 Town Hall\*

#### **World War 1 Service**

2 Mar 1917: Enlisted AIF WW1, Adelaide, South Australia

31 Mar 1918: Discharged AIF WW1

1 Apr 1918: Enlisted Royal Australian Navy, HMAS Cerberus

20 Jan 1920: Discharged Royal Australian Navy, Sub Lieutenant, SN Officer

## **Biography**

#### **Early Life**

Hugh John Gay Nicholson was born on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1895, at North Unley, SA, the only child of Donald Nicholson and Flora Dinah Richardson (SA Birth Registration 571/398). Hugh's father, Donald was a Sub-Inspector in the police force in 1920.

Hugh attended Sunday School at St. Andrew's Presbyterian in Unley in 1907.

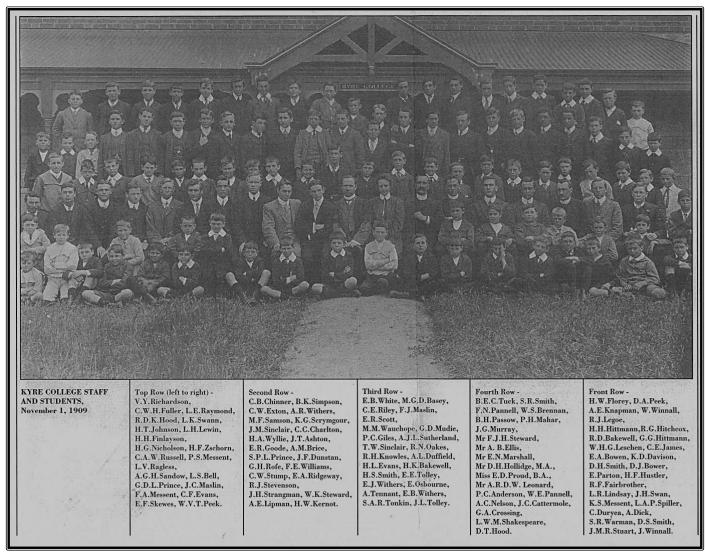
#### **Schooling**

Hugh attended Kyre College (which became Scotch College in 1919) from at least 1909 to 1912. He passed his Junior Examinations in 1910 and his Senior Examinations in 1912.

In December 1911 he was involved in presenting a scene for Shakespeare's Henry IV, part 1, act 3, scene 1 when Hugh played Worcester with J. T Ashton (Hotspur), E. Foster Skewes (Glendower) and H. X. Curnow (Mortimer).

Hugh came third in the 120 yards hurdles at the Kyre College Sports in September 1909. In 1912 Hugh won the 100 yards flat in the Intercollegiate race at the Christian Brothers College Sports.

## 1909 Kyre College – Staff and Students





H.J.G. Nicholson (from group above)

## 1912 Kyre College – Staff and Students



H.J.G. Nicholson – Second row from Front – Third from Left

Hugh played football for Kyre and in 1912 he was captain of the First Eighteen.

He completed two years in the Senior Cadets then transferred to the Citizen's Forces, 28<sup>th</sup> Engineers, 74<sup>th</sup> Infantry & 74<sup>th</sup> Signallers.

Hugh was on the committee of the Kyre College Old Collegians in 1913 and 1914 and was at some stage the secretary of the association. In 1914 he helped contribute to an enjoyable evening at the annual gathering by playing the piano.

## 1912 - Kyre College - First Eighteen



H.J.G Nicholson – Back Row – Fourth from Left (Identifier by profiler as original photograph is unnamed)

#### University

In 1913, Hugh commenced at Adelaide University and the School of Mines, studying Engineering. In addition to passing University and School of Mines examinations in 1913, Hugh also passed School of Arts examinations in Intermediate Perspective (May 1913) and Second Grade Plane Geometry (September 1913). In December 1916 Hugh was awarded his Bachelor of Engineering from the University of Adelaide and his fellowship diploma in electrical engineering from the School of Mines. He was an unsuccessful applicant for the 1917 Rhodes Scholarship which was won by Hugh William Bell Cairns

### **University Sport**

#### **Football**

Hugh played football for Adelaide University in both the B Grade and A Grade in 1913. He also represented the University at the 1913 Intervarsity Football match and played A Grade football in 1914.

#### Rowing

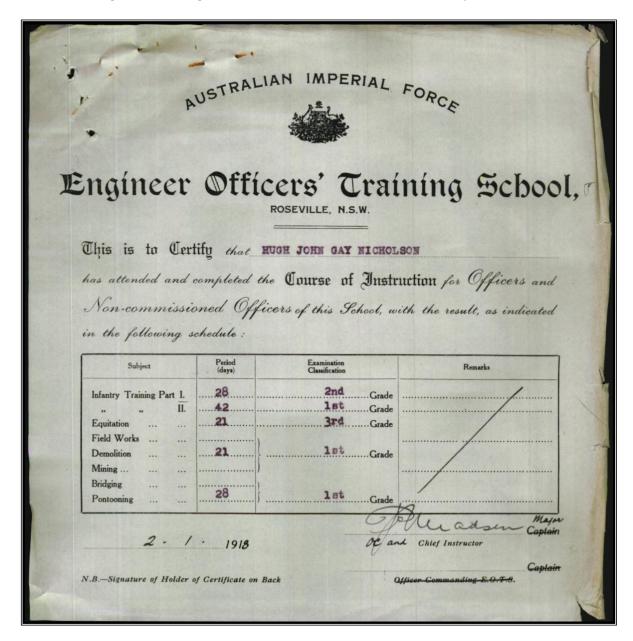
Hugh rowed for the Engineers at the Adelaide University Schools Boat Regatta in July 1914; the Engineers lost their heat to the School of Arts.

#### Cricket

Hugh played cricket for the University in a match in January 1916, perhaps covering the absence of players because of War-time service or University holidays.

#### World War I

Hugh enlisted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 1917 at Adelaide, SA, SN S11218, aged 21 years and 5 months and as an Engineer. He was 5 '9¼", 160 lbs, with a fresh complexion, blue eyes and auburn hair. His father, Donald Nicholson of Palmer St, North Unley was his next of kin. Hugh was assigned to the Tunnelling Reinforcements, B Coy, Mitcham, SA and went to Engineering Officers School where he was first a Sapper then an acting Corporal and an acting Sergeant. On the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1918 Hugh was discharged from the AIF in order to enlist in the Navy.



Hugh joined the Royal Australian Navy 1 April 1918 and was appointed an Engineers Sub Lieutenant.

He was assigned for duty as follows:

- 'Cerberus' 1 April 1918 to 29 April 1918
- London Depot 30 April 1918 to 1 July 1918
- 'Melbourne' 2 July 1918 to 5 August 1919
- 'Australia' 6 August 1919 to 20 January 1920

Hugh was present at the handover of the German Navy in November 1918 and wrote to his father describing the event. Hugh resigned from the Navy on 20th January 1920.

## NAVAL SURRENDER.

#### SOUTH AUSTRALIANS PRESENT.

There were three Ade aide University then present on the consistent of the handthen present on the occasion of the handing over the Germany navy—Sub-Licutenant G. I. D. Hutchesoon, of Sturtstreet, who was on H.M.A.S. Australia; Sub-Licutenant H. J. G. Nicholson, son of Sergeant Donald Nicholson, of the City Watchhouse, who was on the cruiser Melbourne; and Sub-Licutenant R. Berry Smith, of Unley, who was on the cruiser Sydney. In a letter to his parents, dated November 23, Sub-Licutenant Nicholson stated:—This has indeed been a momentous week, for we took a leading part in tous week, for we took a leading part in the handing over of the Hun fleet, and are guarding them at the present time. At 8.30 we went to action stations with all our gear shipped and half an hour later the first of the Huns came in right. In the van was one of our light cruisers, followed by five battle cruisers and 10 battle-ships. We passed them about six miles off. By this time we had hoisted our battle flags, and they were flying their ensigns with the flagsoip carrying a white flag. A little later we came abreast of seven light cruisers, following one of ours, and then we turned. At midday 49 hun torpedo boats, accompanied by 80 of ours passed us, and soon left us behind. At 3 o clock we dropped anchor off Inchkeith, and it was indeed a wonderful might to see all these Hun ships surround d by ours. The Nurnberg was our particular sain, and we sent a party aboard to see saip, and we sent a party aboard to see that there was no ammunition, and that armistice. Everything was right, and that armistice. Everything was right, and the Hun had removed all the gear in connection with the training and aring of his guns. They found the officers sullen, but the men were cheerful. At 6 o'cock that night we held a thanksgiving service in the waist of the We put our hearts and souls inahip. to the short service, especially in the sing-ing of 'Now Thank we all Our God.' At once my mind flashed back to my college days when we were reading the history of Friedrich der Grosse in German. After Friedrich der Grosse in German. After one of his victories he had he troops massed and they sang the same hymn. What a difference! And a short distance from us was lying the Friedrich der Grosse, the Hun flagship. On Friday morning we coaled whilst our boarding party made the final inspection of the Nurnberg. The Sydney was looking after the Emden. What made the Sydney was looking after the Emden. What Yesterday morning the first batch irony! of destroyers left for Scapa. In the afternoon about ten of us made a tour in our steambeat, and thus had a very close look at the iluns. The first we came to was the Lunder. She had a couple of Iron

Crosses on her bows placed there by the Kaise: to celebrate the deeds of her predecessor. All the ships had some emblem on their bows, whilst on their stern was the Imperial crest. Yesterday Arthur Means arrived to take over as senior engineer. He is from Australia, and is an old School of Mines chap, so we shall get on weal together."

#### **Career & Family Life**

In August 1920, the Council of the Adelaide University awarded the Angas Engineering Scholarship to Hugh. Hugh's 24-page submission for the scholarship was entitled 'The Burning of Australian Coal in Warships' and is held in the Adelaide University Archives (Series 372, Student Essays and Theses). The scholarship was tenable for two years and Hugh left in September 1920 for England and America to further his studies.



In October 1921 Hugh was one of eight former students at the SA School of Mines who were gaining experience working at the Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Company (late British Westinghouse).

The Principal of the School of Mines (Mr. F. W. Reid, B.Sc.) has received a letter from Manchester, England, stating that eight former students of the school are engaged at the works of the Metropolitan-Viokers Electrical Company (late British Westinghouse) of that city. They are supplementing the course of training received in Adelaide by two years practical experience in England, after which it is expected that they will return to Australia. The past students referred to are Messrs. C. W. Blackler, A. G. Hall, H. R. Harding, H. M. Longbottom, H. J. G. Nicholson, L. M. Rendell, E. H. Riddle, and J. C. Roach.

On his return to Australia Hugh took up a position with Australian General Electric Pty Ltd as an engineer in Melbourne, Victoria. He was living at Lauriston Hall, Wellington Pde, East Melbourne in 1924.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1925, Hugh married Marjorie Eleanor Elizabeth Skuthorpe, the elder daughter of Mrs O.T. Skuthorpe, Brentwood, St Kilda Road, Melbourne at Christ Church, South Yarra. The couple were living at 5 Tollington Ave, Malvern East and in 1925 they moved to 185 Toorak Road, South Yarra. In 1928 Hugh and Marjorie were living at 6 Albany Road, Toorak and their only child, a daughter (Margaret Anne) was born there on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1928.

In October 1929 Hugh visited South Australia and attended the celebrations to honour Sir Langdon Bonython's 40<sup>th</sup> consecutive year as President of the School of Mines.

Sir Langdon Bonython, who this r will c omplete his 40th co tive year of office as president of the South Australian School of Mines and South Austranan School of Manes and Industries, will be entertained by gra-duates of the school at a compli-mentary dinner on Saturday, October 19. The function will be attended by everal graduates now residing be ed South Australia, including Mr. G. C. Klug, London; Mesers. W. E. Wain wright, general manager of the Broken Hill South, F. R. Hockey, C. A. Hack, and H. J. G. Nicholson, Melb Engineer-Lieutenant-Commander erry Smith, Sydney, Port Pirie, Port n, Whyalla, and other State centres will also be represented

Hugh and Marjorie had been living at 420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne and in 1931 they moved to 59 Westbury Street, St Kilda East where they lived until 1949

In 1934, on a visit to Adelaide, Hugh gave an address at the Scotch Old Collegians' Annual Meeting. Hugh attended a dinner at Scott's Hotel, Melbourne in September 1936 with a group of graduates from the School of Mines and the Adelaide University. Sadly, Hugh's father passed away on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 1937 leaving his mother, Flora, a widow.

In May 1944 Hugh was appointed Controller of Electrical Equipment in the Ministry of Munitions and was located at Henty House, 499 Little Collins Street, Melbourne.

MUNITIONS APPOINTMENT. MELBOURNE. May 1 -The Minister for Munitions (Mr Makin) announced yesterday that it has been decided to appoint a controller of electrical equipment in the Ministry of Munitions in order to route all requirements through central authority, thereby simplifying the approach to the most efficient source of supply. The controller, who will be sponsible to the director of machine tools and gauges, is Mr H. J. Nicholson, who has previously been in charge of the manufacture and distribution of the largest proportion of industrial electrical equipment.

For sport, Hugh was now a golfer and he played at the Kingston club. His last abode in Victoria was a East St, St. Kilda.

In July 1951 Hugh, Marjorie and their daughter Margaret Anne moved to South Australia and were living at Heathpool. Hugh played golf at Glenelg.

In January 1952, Margaret became engaged to William Roberts Clifton, son of Mr and Mrs J. Clifton of Kingswood. The couple were married on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1952 at St Columba's Church, Hawthorn.

In 1952 the cartoonist, Lionel Coventry, at the News drew a caricature of Hugh.



In November 1953, Hugh was the South Australian agent for British Insulated Calender's Cables Limited when the company ceased to carry on business in the state.

#### Death

Hugh died on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1972 at Kensington Gardens, SA, aged 77 years; he had been residing at Heathpool, SA. He was cremated at Centennial Park Cemetery, RSL Walls W 105 B004. Marjorie passed away on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1986 and was cremated at Centennial Park Cemetery.

William Roberts Clifton passed away on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2005 (Last abode - Linden Park) and Margaret Anne Clifton passed away on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2012 (Last abode - Myrtle Bank).

## Profile Compiled by: Beth Filmer AUFC/AUCC WW1 Memorial Committee

#### Sources

The AIF Project <a href="https://www.aif.adfa.edu.au/">https://www.aif.adfa.edu.au/</a>

RSL Virtual War Memorial <a href="https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/">https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/</a>

The National Archives of Australia <a href="http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/">http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/</a>
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The Adelaide University <a href="http://www.adelaide.edu.au/records/archives/">http://www.adelaide.edu.au/records/archives/</a>
The National Library of Australia <a href="http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/">http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/</a>

(Trove Newspaper articles tagged – Hugh J. G. Nicholson)

SA Genealogy <a href="https://www.genealogysa.org.au/resources/online-databases.html">https://www.genealogysa.org.au/resources/online-databases.html</a>

https://www.centennialpark.org/memorial-search/

Kyre College Photographs from 'The Kyrian', with thanks to Scotch College Old Collegians

SA State Records - SRSA reg GRG 26/5/4/1940

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State Library of South Australia 'The Kyrian' - Kyre College Magazine Ancestry.com.au - Electoral Roll