



Lieutenant John LEASK

[1865 – 1900]



E Company 3rd Queensland Mounted Infantry – Third Queensland Contingent

John Leask was born in Aberdeen, Scotland in 1865. He served with the 1st Volunteer Battalion of Gordon Highlanders for five years.

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In 1888 he moved to Maryborough, Queensland. He was a member of the Maryborough Rifle Club and is recorded as being '*a fine shot*'.

In 1893 he moved to Bundaberg and was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Mounted Infantry.

His civilian employment is listed as '*Commission Agent in Bundaberg*' and that he '*resides at his own farm*'.

He was selected to form part of the 3rd Queensland Mounted Infantry Third Queensland Contingent that left Brisbane on 2 March 1900.

Leask deployed with his unit and saw action with the principal engagements including Relief of Mafeking (16-17 May 1900), and the defeat at Koster River (22 July 1900).

Lieutenant Leask died of wounds in Pretoria, aged 35 years on 20 August 1900. The AWM records state that he was: '*Severely wounded at Koster River, 22nd July 1900; Died of wounds and pneumonia at Pretoria 20th August 1900*'.

The Third Queensland Contingent comprised The Queensland [Citizen] Bushmen; 3rd Queensland Mounted Infantry; and 2nd Bushman Regiment. Its strength on embarkation was 316, ordered in two or three mounted rifle companies in each unit. The Commanding Officer was Major Walter H. Tunbridge. They embarked with their horses in Brisbane on 2 March 1900 on the transport *Duke of Portland*.

They were deployed in theatre from April 1900 - April 1901. Initially under General Carrington in Rhodesia and West Transvaal – with principal engagements including Relief of Mafeking (16-17 May 1900), defeat at Koster River (22 July 1900) and defence of Elands River Post (4-16 August 1900). They also served under General Plumer in Northern Transvaal - including the battle of Rhenoster Kop (29 November 1900), and the advance on Pietersburg.

The Contingent returned dismounted to Australia in June 1901, disembarking from the transport *Morayshire* in Sydney and onward movement to Brisbane was by train. The Contingent's casualties were three killed or died of wounds (including Lieutenants Annat and Leask), and five died of disease.

Sources included:

- Australian War Memorial
- National Archives of Australia
- Various web pages
- *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