

Footscray Town Hall's Roll of Honour

In 1916, the *Footscray Advertiser* announced that Footscray Council would create an honour roll, not only commemorating those who lost their lives, but also those who enlisted, so long as they could prove a link to the municipality and arrange to have their names registered with Mr J M Carroll, Footscray's town clerk. Council settled on a design expected to cost £150: ten panels of Australian blackwood with space for 1200 names painted in gold leaf.

But the honour roll could not accommodate the expanding list of names being put forward. By August 1917, 2700 had volunteered from Footscray so Council doubled the number of panels from ten to twenty. If you peruse the list of names today you can see the disruption it caused to the strict alphabetical order. Names beginning with 'A' start thrice, making it more challenging to find an individual.

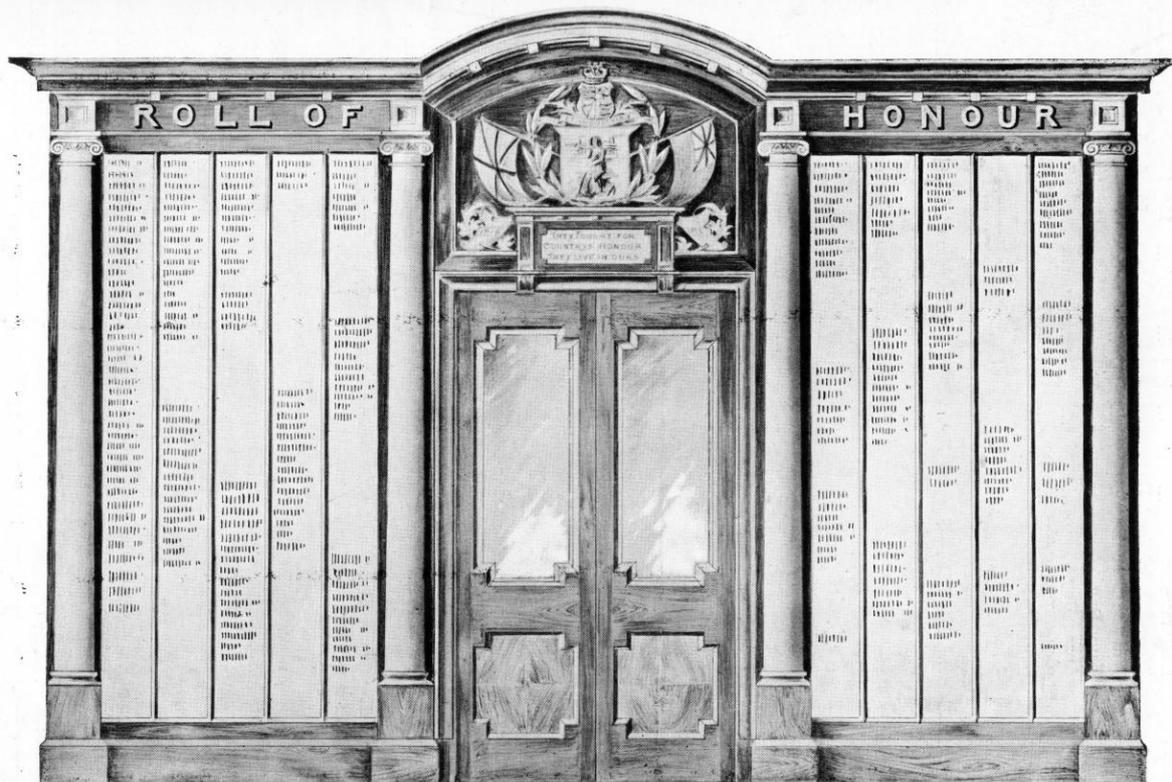


General Birdwood's last day at Gallipoli on December 19, 1915. Photo Australian War Memorial. AWM G00659

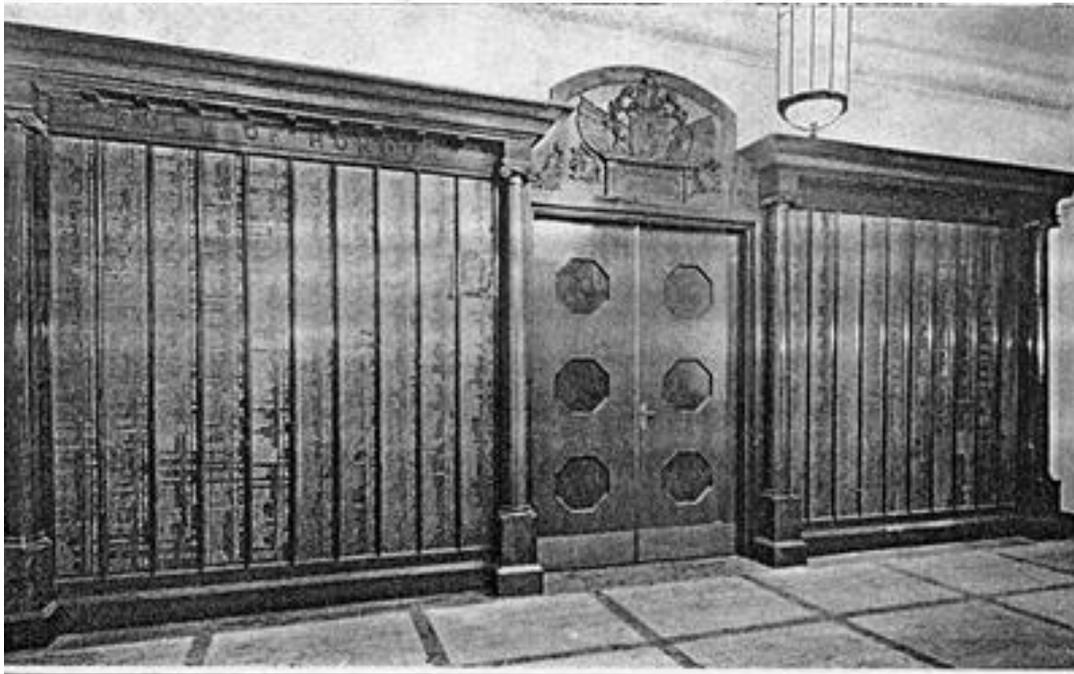
In January 1920, General Sir William Birdwood and Brigadier General Charles Henry Brand inspected the Footscray Town Hall Honour Board admiring its craftsmanship and scale. Reportedly, it was “the finest thing of its kind in the Commonwealth”.

According to Professor John Lack, author of *A History of Footscray*:

In 1933, on the eve of the installation of the Roll of Honour in pride of place in the new Town Hall, Footscray was home to 1519 veterans (1515 men and 4 women) who survived the war, injury, and the post-war economic depression that gripped Australia. Every one of them had a fallen mate whose name was on the Roll of Honour.



THE MUNICIPAL HONOR BOARD AT TOWN HALL.



A tribute to Footscray's 3,000 citizens who served in the Great War. The Honor Board—a beautiful specimen of the woodworker's skill—which has been transferred from the Town Hall recently demolished, to the new Civic Building.

Source: City of Footscray Annual Report 1935-36.

THE HONOR BOARD.

A DESIGN CHOSEN.

At the council on Monday night Cr Shillabeer reported on the designs for honor boards submitted to the committee. Certain details, utilitarian rather than artistic, have still to be settled and the matter was referred back to the committee for completion.

The roll of honor is to face the main Town Hall entrance and to replace the black and gold notice boards and doorway that now occupy that position. The list of names fill the side spaces, the chief ornamentation being round the doorway, which becomes part of the design.

The favorite in the competition is one submitted by a Melbourne firm, the Goldman Manufacturing Co., and is wholly in Australian blackwood. The table of names, surrounded by ornamental carving, and supported by light doric pillars, flank the double doors that lead to the surveyor's and electrician's offices. Over the door is a plain arch in which is depicted the Imperial Arms, surmounting the motto, Et Justitia, and below that the arms of the city of Footscray. Below this again is a bold panel bearing the words: "They fought for their country's honor; they live in ours." This panel is supported in its turn by a shield on each side, that on the left bearing the date 1914 and on the right—unhappily—a date not yet known. The flag of Australia and United Kingdom support the city shield, but they are plain carving and in keeping with the whole design, which is light, subdued, appropriate and good. The selection committee has chosen well.

Two local designs were submitted, both excellent of their kind, but it was no doubt felt that this was one of the occasions—that of erecting what is practically a national memorial—when local patriotism must give place to the artistic fitnesses.

Mr E. Ward, of Yarraville, was unfortunate in the coloring of his design—the real thing would doubtless have been much more subdued. The design showed a central arch with sweeping curved wings supported by rather heavy fluted pillars. In the left wing was a wreath and scroll with the words "The Path of Duty was the way to Glory," in the right, similar decorative, with the words "To the men of Footscray who have fought and fallen." Within the centre arc was an orient surmounting the Royal arms; below that a medallion bearing the Footscray arms. Bold flags, British and Australian, in colors flanked the Footscray shield.

Mr Leslie Ortland's suggestion was bare and unfilled compared with the wealth of detail of the others. His showed the honor boards as flanking the doorway but hardly as part of it. The door seemed to cut into it by accident. Light pillars rise on each side of the design, which embodied much scroll work. Over the upper arch were the words "City of Footscray" on a very wavy ribbon; immediately over the door another ribbon with the words "Roll of Honor." Between these was a simple medallion bearing the words: "Men who have responded to the Country's Call." This was supported by the usual flag design in colour.

Cr Jenkins entered a protest on behalf of local artists but councillors were unanimous in feeling that in this case the best design must win.

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