



## Pratten Rifle Club Centenary

The Pratten Rifle Club is about to notch up a century of sporting achievement in the small Darling Downs community west of Warwick.

Meticulous early records held by club secretary and historian Trevor Badcock trace the origins of the club to a meeting in the town attended by 17 people on June 24, 1909.

Mr Badcock said the rifle club which remains in its original location on a Crown lease block just outside town was a testament to the families who have passed down shooting skills over generations.

“The club has been a part of life in this community for so long and it will continue into the future.”

“There used to be a rifle club in every small country town, but Pratten is one of the few still surviving. We’re one of the only clubs now with a 900 yard range west of Brisbane,” Mr Badcock said.

Pratten itself is a historic community settled in 1888 on the back of a gold rush era and the expansion of a rich pastoral industry opened up by inland explorers.

Things moved quickly from that first meeting to found Pratten Rifle Club with T. Clare elected captain, W. Heffernan secretary and James Payne Treasurer.

Tenders were called to construct the range with a bid for 73 pounds 10 shillings being accepted to complete the task in just eight weeks.

Annual subscription was set at 5 shillings. Ammunition was free as a government contribution to maintaining a pool of skilled marksmen.

The first shooting fixtures were held in November and the club was officially opened by Darling Downs federal politician Littleton Groom on January 21, 1910.

There was strong interclub rivalry, including the local Light Horse troops based around the region. An early competition featured as a trophy a pair of khaki trousers made to measure in Warwick.

The club has been home to many class shooters over the years with minutes noting the splendid performance of member A.W. Allen at an Association Match in Brisbane in 1911.

Jack Cleary and Merv Paholke shot for Queensland in Perth in 1957, the first time two members from the one club were selected together in the State team. Jack won a total 14 Kings and Queens badges.

Jim Dickenson and Ross Hoey are continuing the tradition in 2009 as top Queensland A grade competitors from Pratten.

Trevor Badcock is a relative newcomer, having been a member at Pratten for six years. He is keen to preserve early records and photographs which trace the history of the club and the local community.

“My grandfather Bill was a keen shooter at Warwick. He was captain of the Diggers Club there for umpteen years,” Mr Badcock said.

Pratten Rifle Club captain Mark Paroz belongs to a local farming family with a long association. Mark was a member of the winning Queensland team in Bendigo in 2000. His father Col and grandfather Jack Paroz were both active members.

Pratten affiliated with the Southern Downs Rifle Association in 1913 and the Queensland Rifle Association in 1925.

**For more information, contact Trevor Badcock on 4667 4955.**

