



Robert Rankine

Rosemary Phillis

Robert Rankine as identified in a 1915 Riverstone football team photo.

According to Army Records, Robert Rankine was born at Laurieton in the Parish of Camden Haven in New South Wales. His parents were William and Jessie Rankine. At some stage the family moved to Schofields and it is understood that Robert attended the Schofields Public School.

At the time of his enlistment in 1916, his occupation was listed as a plumber, being apprenticed to his father. His residence was Schofield's Siding. The family were members of the Presbyterian Church congregation at Riverstone.

At the time of his enlistment medical examination at Victoria Barracks, Robert was 25 years and five months. He was five feet six inches tall and weighed 129lbs. His chest measurement was 35-37.5 inches. His eyes and hair were brown. He was listed as having a long vertical scar in the centre of his abdomen from an abdominal hydatid six years ago. He also had a scar on his back and his hip.

Robert enlisted on 22 March 1916. The times leading up to his departure from Australia were captured in several references in the *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*:-

19 May 1916

Schofields Send off

Schofields Progress Association members determined that they would not let the occasion of enlistments of our local boys go by without an appreciation of some kind from the residents...

In handing a wristlet watch to Robert Rankin, Mr Saundercock gave good advice to all the recipients who thanked the donors....

26 May 1916

At Riverstone four soldiers were farewelled at Riverstone in the Presbyterian Church on Saturday evening, and presented with safety razors, bibles and other articles suitable to the needs of camp life. There was a large attendance of both past and present Sunday school scholars and other friends.

The departing soldiers were Cecil Greenshaw, Rupert Vidler, Robert Rankin and Alex Stubbs. The two former are on their way to France and their relatives received their presents, and will forward them to the front. The presentations were made by the Rev. Jas. Steele, who spoke a few words of encouragement to the men and comfort to the parents.

4 August 1916

Several of the boys who have enlisted – Messrs R. Rankin, C. Bryant, S. Alderton, and Wilson – were home for the weekend, returning on Sunday to the several camps at Goulburn, Kiama and Liverpool.

Robert was part of the 19th Reinforcements 2nd Infantry Battalion AIF and embarked onboard the CC Troopship ‘Wiltshire’ on 22 August 1916, arriving at Plymouth in England just under two months later on 13 October 1916.

After two months in England he proceeded to France on 13 December 1916 on board the ‘Arundel’, sailing from Folkstone. He was wounded in action on 9 April 1917, taken to the Operating Centre at the 3rd Casualty Clearing Station with a GSW Abdomen (gun shot wound to the abdomen) where he died as a result of his wounds on 10 April 1917.

The *Windsor and Richmond Gazette* of 11 May 1917 reported:

Pte Robert Rankin, son of William Rankin, of Riverstone, was killed in action on April 10, during the big push between Lens and Arrars, which occurred in Easter week. The sad news came through on April 26, to Rev. James Steele, who informed the parents. The young soldier left the Australian shores with the 17th Reinforcements of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Brigade. He was a fine footballer, a splendid rifle shot, and won the battalion prize at Liverpool, and again won the prize at Salisbury Plains for accurate shooting. Being such a good shot it is believed he was engaged in sniping. He was born at Camden Haven was 26 years of age and went to France in December 1916.

Robert was buried in the Pozieres British Cemetery, Ovillers-La Boisselle in France. His name was listed on Honour rolls at the Riverstone Railway Station, the Riverstone Cenotaph, the Schofields Public School and the Presbyterian Church (now the Uniting Church) at Riverstone.

Robert’s personal effects were returned to his mother. They consisted of “an Identity disc, Wallet, Belt, 2 Knives, Nail Clippers, Badges, Match box cover, Metal mirror, letters, Photos, Cards, Writing pad.” She acknowledged receipt on 29 October 1917. His mother, Jessie Rankin, was granted a Pension of £2 per fortnight from 24 June 1917.



Chris and Joe Counter lay flowers at the base of Robert's grave in Pozieres Cemetery.

Photos courtesy of Chris Counter