

RALPH ROBERTSON #646

Ralph joined the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF) on 11 August 1914 and was allocated to G Company. After training in Sydney he departed from Sydney for Rabaul on the BERRIMA on 19th August, with the Force, they being the first Australians to leave Australia following the declaration of war.

Ralph was born in Aylestone, Leicestershire, England on 5th August 1883, the son of Richard Horteous Robertson and his wife Jeanne Abby, nee Flowers. The family migrated to Australia on the CHIMBORAZO, arriving on 5th July 1885. Ralph was just short of his third birthday.

He started his Aussie Rules football career with the South Beach Club, part of the St Kilda League. At just 17 years of age, he joined the St Kilda Football Club and played his first of 14 games with the club on 2 September 1899.

He was the country representative for the wheat merchants Darling and Son and in 1902 was transferred to Sydney. There being no Ausie Rules in Sydney at the time he took up Rugby Union. In 1903 when Aussie Rules finally landed in Sydney he returned to that game and in 1908 was captain of the NSW Team. He was captain in 1911 and in 1914, playing a total of 41 games with the NSW State team.

He returned from Rabaul and was discharged on 4th March 1915, having completed 206 days service. He enlisted again on 7th April but was discharged "at own request" some 15 days later.

He returned to England and joined the Hampshire Regiment (# 17/357) on a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant. At some stage he was transferred to the Royal Flying Corps (RFC).

On 11 May 1917 whilst flying a Bristol Scout over Egypt, he was blinded by the setting sun and collided head on with another plane. H was killed instantly.

Ralph is commemorated at the Alexandria (Hadra) War memorial Cemetery, Egypt.