

**Colchester Cemetery,
Colchester, Essex
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



493 PRIVATE

F. R. RANKIN

21ST BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

10TH SEPTEMBER, 1916 Age 21

*God Has Saved
From Weary Strife
In Its Dawn
This Young Fresh Life*

Francis Roy RANKIN

Francis Roy Rankin was born at Mount Moriac, Victoria in 1895 to parents Francis Joseph and Alvina Ferdinand Rankin (nee Bartlett).

Francis Roy Rankin attended Grammar School at Kyneton, Victoria.

Francis Roy Rankin was a 20 year old, single, Clerk at Victorian Savings Bank when he enlisted in Melbourne, Victoria on 22nd January, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 493 & his religion was Methodist. His next of kin was listed as his father - Rev. F. J. Rankin, Methodist Parsonage, Burnie, Tasmania. Francis Roy Rankin stated on his Attestation Papers that he had served with Citizen Forces. Francis Rankin had a tattoo of an anchor on his left forearm.

Private Francis Roy Rankin was posted to 21st Battalion for recruit training on 22nd January, 1915.

Private Francis Roy Rankin embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Ulysses* (A38) on 10th May, 1915 with the 6th Infantry Brigade, 21st Infantry Battalion, "B" Company.

Private Francis Roy Rankin proceeded to join M.E.F. (Mediterranean Expeditionary Force) at Gallipoli from Alexandria on 29th August, 1915.

Newspaper item - *The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times*, Tasmania –25 November, 1915:

THE TORPEDOED TRANSPORT

TAKING TO THE BOATS

ADVENTURES IN THE WATER

A BURNIE LETTER

The following graphic account of the torpedoing of the transport Southland is from a letter of Private F. R. Rankin, who was on board, to his mother, at Burnie:—

The trip from Alexandria was the most delightful I have had until one morning when I was down below laughing and joking with some of my mates. There was a crash, and the ship seemed to stop dead. We all realised we had been torpedoed, so we quickly picked our life belts and started to go up on deck. But of course the crowds from the decks were coming down for their belts, and it was some time before we could go up. But everybody was calm and cool, and there was no hurrying, let alone pushing or struggling. When I reached the deck the ship was still slowly moving, though the engines had stopped, and she was swinging round to starboard and had an ominous list to port, where the torpedo had struck her. We fell in opposite our boat and waited until the seamen had got it ready. The boat was left hanging from one davit, and was over-turned in being lowered. The crews of two or three other boats let the same thing happen. I was one of the first to strike the water, and took a neat header, with the rest on top of me. It seemed a long time before I could struggle to the surface, and when I did come up there were two or three others clinging to me, and a waterproof sheet and blanket rolled and tied in the shape of a yoke round my neck. By the time I had got rid of these I found myself drifting across the ship's propellers which luckily were not revolving. I was finding it impossible to reach the boat, being hindered by belt, boots and clothes, as well as the waves, and was drifting away with dozens of others floating about and clinging to wreckage about me from the ship's boats, until I spied the end of a rope floating near me. I grabbed this and hauled myself along it till it brought me to a boat. It was sinking and crowded, and the men couldn't find the drain hole, which had not been plugged. They managed to keep her afloat by bailing until they found the hole and plugged it. But our troubles had only begun. Everybody was talking at once, and no one was in charge. Some wanted to stay near the ship, which didn't seem in a hurry to sink. One of the sailors wanted to hoist the mast and sail and make for an island just on the horizon. His idea was scouted, because we were nearly capsizing at every wave as it was, the boat being over-crowded. The gear, sails and mast were very heavy, and took up a lot of room ; so another sailor wanted them thrown overboard, but the crowd wouldn't hear of that either. We might want them, some one said. At last a sergeant-major ordered us to row for the island. We made terribly slow progress, and in a couple of hours were only a couple of miles from the ship, the waves and breeze being against us. The ship was still floating, much to our surprise, as we had expected her to go down within a few minutes. But our concern was to keep our own little boat from upsetting, and only by carefully keeping her head to

the waves could we manage this. Presently a streak of smoke was seen on the horizon, and very quickly a ship came into view; she was a hospital ship, and six others soon came after her, and began picking up the scattered boats. Three of them were destroyers, and it was a grand sight to see them streaking, yet sneaking, through the water at their top speed. We were taken on a cruiser, where the sailors fed us, dried our clothes and gave us cigarettes. That night we were brought into port and put on board a troopship. Our ship came in under her own steam, and was run aground. The forward hold was the only part of the ship filled with water, the watertight compartments saving her. The torpedo had fortunately gone between the boilers and magazines, missing both. We were a shipwrecked looking lot, most of the soldiers having no hats, tunics, putties, boots or socks. Some were dressed in sailors' clothes, and some half in sailors' and half in soldiers'.

Private Francis Roy Rankin disembarked from *Ascanius* at Alexandria on 7th December, 1915 from Mudros (and evacuation of Gallipoli).

21st Battalion

The 21st Battalion was raised, as part of the 6th Brigade, at Broadmeadows in Victoria in February 1915. Its recruits hailed from all over the state. The later enlistment of these men, and their average age of 29, would seem to indicate a more considered decision to enlist that set them apart from those who did so amidst the heady enthusiasm of late 1914.

The 21st Battalion arrived in Egypt in June 1915. As part of the newly raised 2nd Australian Division, it proceeded to Gallipoli in late August. It was an eventful trip, the battalion's transport was torpedoed near the island of Lemnos and had to be abandoned. The battalion finally landed at ANZAC Cove on 7 September. It had a relatively quiet time at Gallipoli, as the last major Allied offensives had been defeated in August.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private Francis Roy Rankin was admitted to 6th Field Ambulance at Tel-el-Kebir on 16th January, 1916 with Pyrexia (fever). He was transferred to 5th Field Ambulance the same day then transferred to 2nd Australian Casualty Clearing Station on 17th January, 1916 with P.U.O. (Pyrexia (fever) of unknown origin). Private Rankin was transferred & admitted to 2nd General Hospital at Gizeregh on 18th January, 1916 with Influenza.

Private Francis Roy Rankin was admitted to Hospital on 21st January, 1916 at Tel-el-Kebir.

Private Francis Roy Rankin was discharged from 2nd Australian General Hospital at Gizeregh on 19th February, 1916 & admitted to 3rd Australian General Hospital at Abbassia the same day suffering from Broncho Pneumonia. He was discharged on 25th February, 1916 to Convalescent Depot at Helouan then discharged to Gizeregh on 29th February, 1916.

Private Francis Roy Rankin was marched in to overseas Base at Gizeregh on 6th March, 1916 then transferred to his Battalion from Details at Moascar on 7th March, 1916.

Private Francis Roy Rankin proceeded to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force) from Alexandria on 19th March, 1916 & disembarked at Marseilles, France on 26th March, 1916.

Private Francis Roy Rankin was written up on 18th May, 1916 while posted at Rue Fleurie for being absent from Biller. He was awarded 3 days C.B. (confined to Barracks) on 20th May, 1916.

Private Francis Roy Rankin took part in a raid on enemy's trenches on night of 29th -30th June, 1916.

Private Francis Roy Rankin was wounded in action in France on 30th July, 1916. He was admitted to 44th Casualty Clearing Station on 30th July, 1916 with GSW (gunshot wound/s) to Spine. Private Rankin was admitted to 22nd General Hospital at Camiers, France on 4th August, 1916. He was invalided to England on 9th August, 1916 from Calais on Hospital Ship *Dieppe* with bullet wound paralysis.

21st Battalion

After evacuation from Gallipoli in December 1915, the 21st Battalion arrived in France in March 1916. In April, it was the first Australian battalion to commence active operations on the Western Front. During the battle of Pozieres it was engaged mainly on carrying duties, but suffered its heaviest casualties of the war during the fighting around Mouquet Farm.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

War Diary – 21st Battalion

Pozieres – 30th July, 1916:

Preparing orders for Attack on German line & making preliminary arrangements re keeping direction etc. Taking over trenches from 23rd Bn. whom we relieved on the afternoon of this date.

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Private Francis Roy Rankin was admitted to General Hospital at Colchester, England on 10th August, 1916. The Hospital Admissions form records: “ 10/8/16 wound 2 weeks old, quite healed. Bullet entered left side of neck in front at level of Thyroid, out near spine, left side. No control of water of Bowels. Complete ____ of legs, but feel when touched. 12/8/16 Cystitis present, passes motions continuously. 18/8/16 Haematuria, pus in urine, Diarrhoea.”

The War Gratuity Schedule form records for 14th August, 1916 – “NOK advised dangerously ill – G.S.W. Spine.” On 18th August, 1916 ““NOK advised Removed from dangerous list.”

Private Francis Roy Rankin died at 11.40 pm on 10th September, 1916 at General Military Hospital, Colchester, Essex, England from wounds received in action in France – fractured spine & paralysis of lower extremities. The Hospital Admissions form also recorded after his death “*He also had a carotid aneurism.*”

A death for Francis Rankin, aged 21, was registered in the September quarter, 1916 in the district of Colchester, Essex, England.

Private Francis Roy Rankin was buried on 15th September, 1916 in Colchester Cemetery, Colchester, Essex, England – Grave no. 48, Section S. Division 1.

[Note – Other Australian Soldiers buried in Colchester Cemetery have a letter in their Service Record file that was sent to the next-of-kin advising that the remains had been exhumed & re-interred. There is no such letter in the Record file for the late Private Francis Roy Rankin, however his remains would have been re-interred as the current information of the location of the grave of Private Rankin by the CWGC is T. 6. 1.]

Private Francis Roy Rankin has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

The Red Cross Wounded & Missing file for Private Francis Roy Rankin contains a request from the Red Cross on behalf of the relatives to obtain the fullest details possible into his circumstances and burial. An update was sent on 6th September, 1916:

- “Admitted to Colchester Mil. Hosp. 10-8-16 with fractured spine- has paralysis of lower extremities. Very seriously ill – not expected to live long. Cert by Letter from O.C. 6-9-16.”

A letter was written by Lieut-Colonel G.S. McLoughlin, R.A.M.C., General Hospital, Colchester which reads:

- “Pte Francis Rankin was admitted to the Military Hospital Colchester on the 10th August suffering from Paralysis of both Extremities. He was shot by a Sniper whilst carrying a box of Bombs across the open. The wound was high up in his (cervical) spinal region. He died on September 10th at 11.40 pm after 24 hours unconsciousness. His effects were sent to his Mother after his death with a New Testament containing his diary, brooch, some French, Egyptian and Italian Money and two French dictionaries. He was buried at

Colchester and the exact number of his grave can be obtained from the Headquarters, Australian Imperial Force, 130 Horseferry Rd, Westminster S.W."

Private Francis Roy Rankin was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Rankin's father – Rev. F. J. Rankin, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent August, 1921 & Plaque sent May, 1922).

Gordon Rankin, Flat 8, 959 Burke Road, Camberwell, Victoria, brother of the late Private Francis Roy Rankin, wrote to Central Army Records Office in August, 1967 to make an application for the Gallipoli Medal on behalf of Private Rankin who *"had served on Gallipoli from about September, 1915 until the evacuation."*

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Francis Roy Rankin – service number 493, aged 21, of 21st Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of Francis Joseph and Alvina F. Rankin, of Golden Square, Bendigo, Victoria, Australia.

F. R. Rankin is remembered on the Kyneton RSL Honour Roll, located in Kyneton RSL, 37-39 Mollison Street, Kyneton, Victoria.

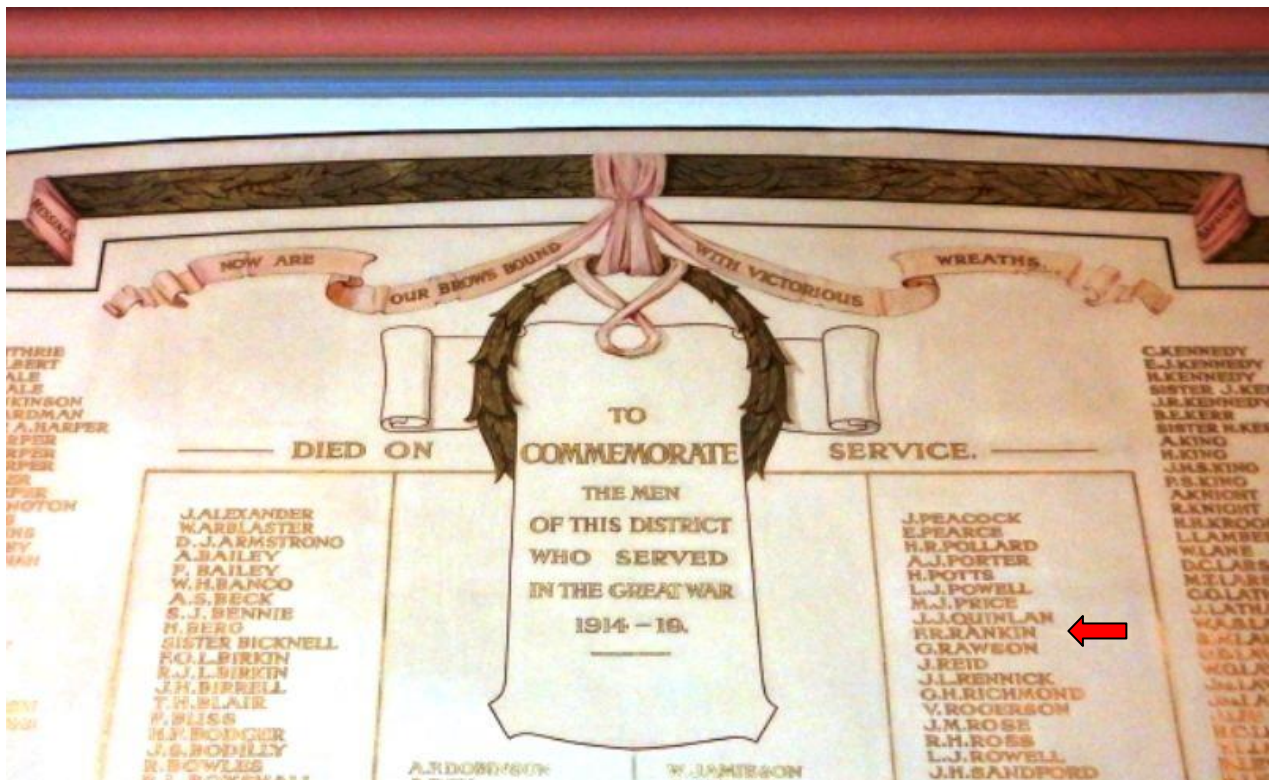


Kyneton RSL Honour Roll (Photo from Monument Australia – Sandra Brown)

F. R. Rankin is remembered on the Kyneton Honour Roll, located in Kyneton Town Hall, 129 Mollison Street, Kyneton, Victoria.



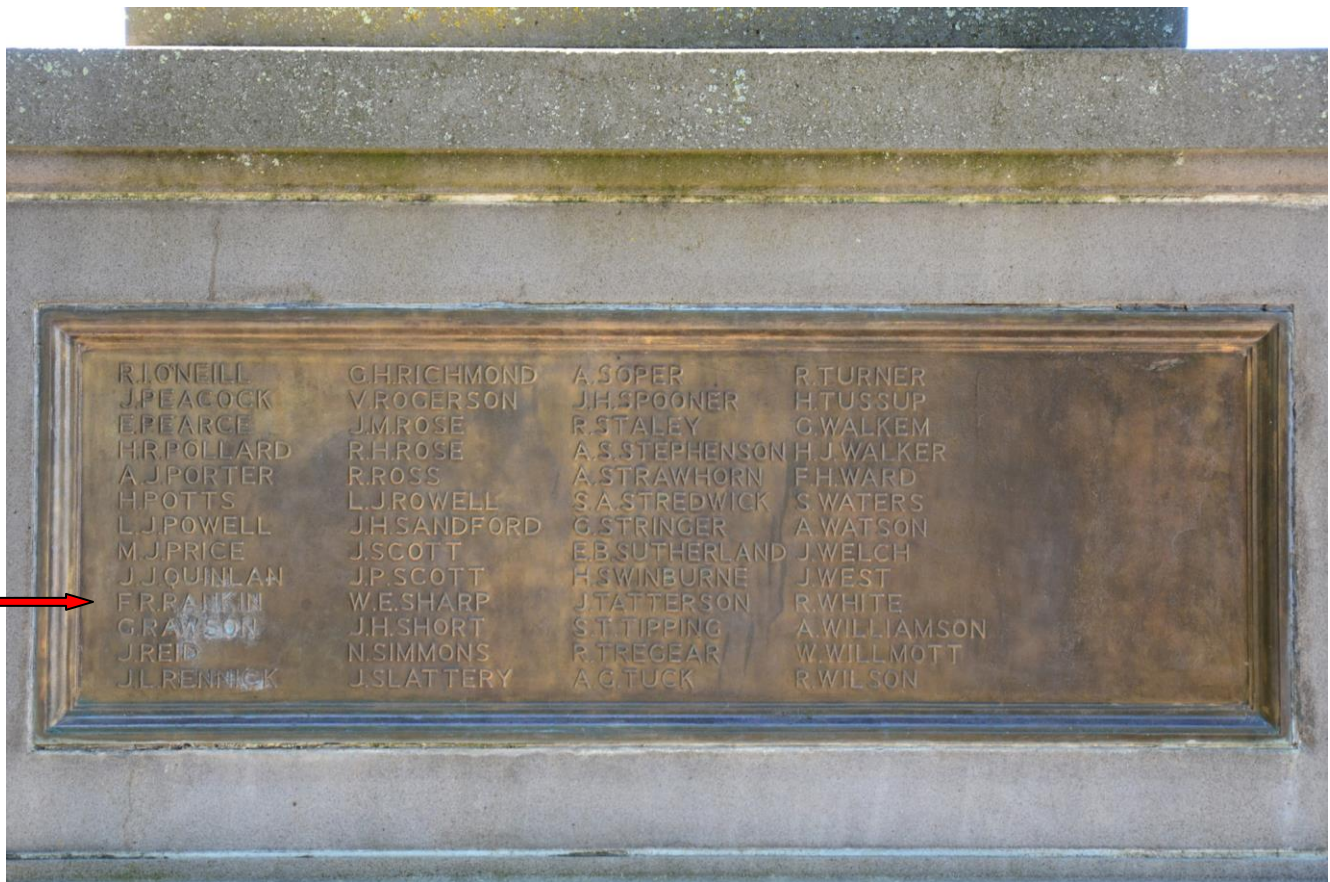
Kyneton Honour Roll (Photos from Monument Australia – Chris McLaughlin)



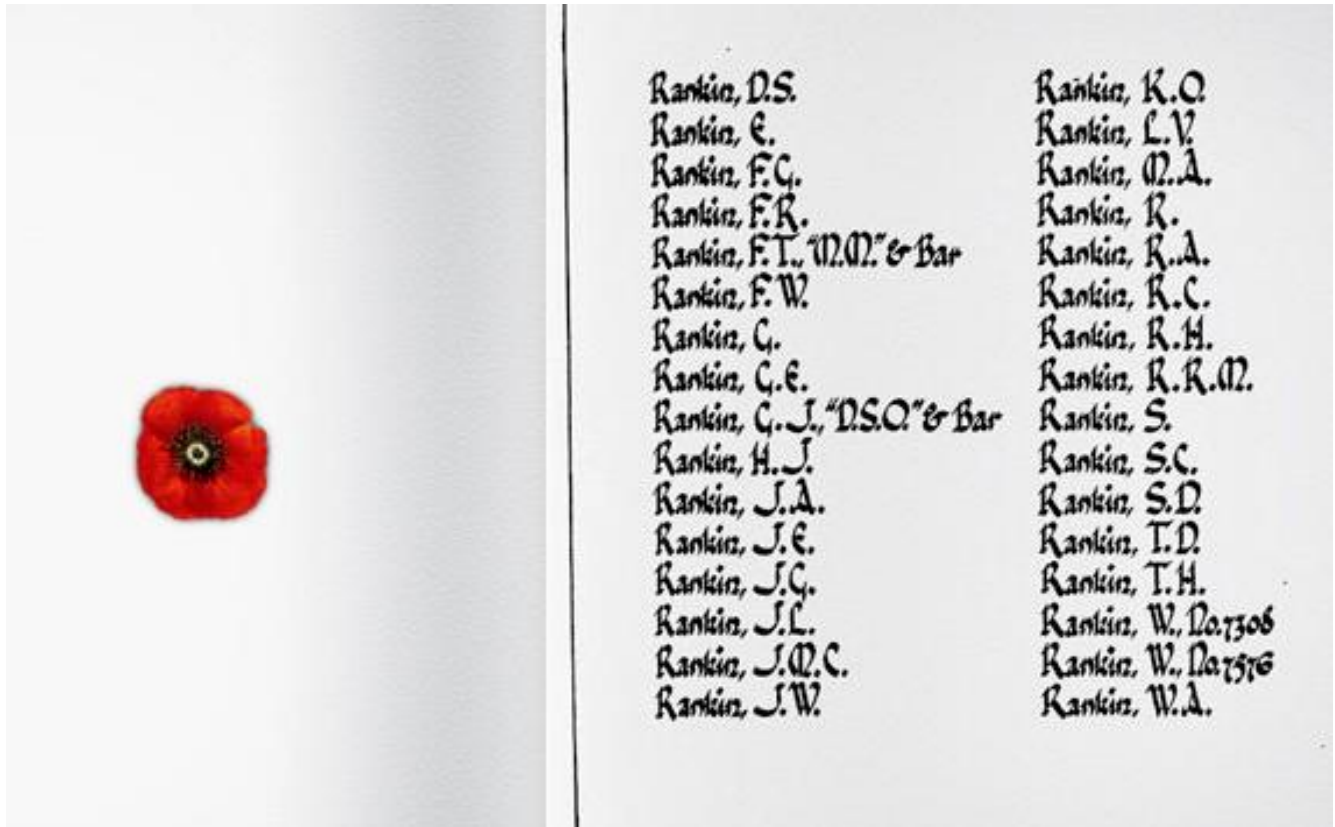
F. R. Rankin is remembered on the Kyneton War Memorial, located at Mollison Street, Kyneton, Victoria.



Kyneton War Memorial (Photos from AWM – Places of Pride – Henry Moulds)



F. R. Rankin is remembered in the Book of Remembrance at the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne, Victoria.



Private F. R. Rankin is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 94.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

(48 pages of Private Francis Roy Rankin's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives



Newspaper Notices

Personal

Francis Roy Rankin, son of the Rev. F. J. Rankin, is in Gallipoli.

(Spectator and Methodist Chronicle, Melbourne, Victoria – 5 November, 1915)

NORTH-WEST COAST

BURNIE

During the last week three young Burnie soldiers were wounded in France – Private F. R. Rankin, son of the Rev. F. J. Rankin, Methodist minister, wounded in the spine, also dangerously ill;.....

(Daily Post, Hobart, Tasmania – 16 August, 1916)

WOUNDED TASMANIANS

On Monday the Rev. F. J. Rankin, of Burnie, received official intimation from the Defence Department, that his son, Private F. R. Rankin, who is attached to an Australian unit in France, stating that he had sustained a gunshot wound in the spine, and in addition was also seriously ill. The Injury was sustained during the recent heavy fighting.

(The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times, Tasmania – 16 August, 1916)

___ CASUALTY LIST

WOUNDED

Private F. R. Rankin, Burnie, Tas

(The Mildura Cultivator, Victoria – 2 September, 1916)

WAR OBITUARIES

Word has been received in Burnie that Private F. R. Rankin, son of the Rev. F. J. Rankin, of Burnie, died as the result of a gunshot wound in the spine received in France.....

(Daily Post, Hobart, Tasmania – 23 September, 1916)

DIED ON SERVICE

RANKIN – On the 10th September, at the Military Hospital, Colchester, England, of wounds received while fighting in France, about the 4th August, Francis Roy Rankin, eldest son of the Rev. F. J. and Alvina F. Rankin, of Burnie, Tasmania, aged 21 years.

(The Argus, Melbourne, Victoria – 26 September, 1916)

DEATHS

RANKIN – On Sept. 10th, Military Hospital, Colchester, England, of wounds received while fighting in France, about Aug. 4th, Francis Roy Rankin, eldest son of the Rev. F. J. and Mrs Rankin, of Burnie, Tasmania, aged 21 years.

(Spectator and Methodist Chronicle, Melbourne, Victoria – 27 September, 1916)

WAR NOTES and NEWS

News has been received of the death of Francis Roy Rankin, son of the Rev. F. J. Rankin, of Burnie. This has come as a great shock owing to the hope raised by previous messages, which stated that he was progressing favourably. Just before going into action he had written home saying, "Don't worry about me; if I am killed I will be all right and if I am only wounded I'll be lucky." We deeply sympathise with our sorrowing friends.

(Spectator and Methodist Chronicle, Melbourne, Victoria – 27 September, 1916)

MOSTLY ABOUT PEOPLE

Death of Private Roy Rankin

Great regret will be felt in Kyneton at the announcement of the death of Private Francis Roy Rankin on the 10th September at the military hospital, Colchester, England, from wounds received while fighting in France about the 4th of August. Private Roy Rankin, who was an old Kyneton Grammar School boy, was the eldest son and only 21, of the Rev. F. J. and Mrs Rankin, of the Methodist Church, Burnie, Tasmania, formerly of Kyneton, and has been for some time with the Australian Expeditionary Forces. He has many friends in Kyneton who will greatly regret the untimely cutting off of what should have been a useful and fruitful life, and whose hearts will go out in sympathy to his bereaved parents, sisters and brothers and other relatives.

(Kyneton Guardian, Victoria – 28 September, 1916)

DIED ON SERVICE

RANKIN – On the 10th September, at the Military Hospital, Colchester, England, of wounds received while fighting in France, about the 4th August, Francis Roy Rankin, eldest son of the Rev. F. J. and Alvina F. Rankin, of Burnie, Tasmania, and grandson of Mr and Mrs Ed. Bartlett, Horsham. Aged 21 years.

(The Horsham Times, Victoria – 29 September, 1916)

DIED ON SERVICE

RANKIN – On the 10th September, at the Military Hospital, Colchester, England, of wounds received while fighting in France, Private F. R. (Roy) Rankin. First to enlist from, and late treasurer of, Toorak Methodist Sunday School.

“He fought and died for us.”

-(Inserted by officers, teachers and scholars)

(The Argus, Melbourne, Victoria – 30 September, 1916)

THE 227th CASUALTY LIST

DIED OF WOUNDS

Private F. R. Rankin, Burnie, T

(The Mildura Cultivator, Victoria – 4 October, 1916)

IN MEMORIAM

On Active Service

RANKIN – In loving memory of our dear soldier son and brother, Francis Roy, 6th Infantry, 21st Batt., who was wounded at Pozieres, 29th July, and died at Colchester Military Hospital, England, September 10, 1916. Egypt, Gallipoli, France.

You were so good and trusting, dear

That when you sae the foe was near,

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You clearly hear your country's call,
And gave your love, your life, your all.
Now you have reached that other shore
Where wars and tumults are no more,
By faith in Jesus, entered rest,
And are forever with the blest.

-(Alvina F. Rankin, Panton street, Golden Square).

(*The Argus*, Melbourne, Victoria – 10 September, 1917)

MEMORIAL SERVICE AT COLCHESTER

GRAVES CAREFULLY TENDED

Prominent Englishmen and women were quick to spring to the defence of Australian soldiers when they were libelled recently in one of the flood of belated war books on the market. The abiding sense of gratitude felt by the English people towards the men from overseas who rallied to the defence of the Empire, is typified in the action of the members of the women's section of the British Legion at Colchester. Mrs. Florence T. Towsey, chairman of the Colchester section, has sent a message to the Australian relatives of the men of the A.I.F. who were laid to rest in the cemetery at Colchester, the quaint old Essex town, which was established in the time of the Saxons, and was once a stronghold of the Danes in the days when they ravaged the coasts of England. It was strongly fortified by the Romans, and the great Roman walls remain almost entire to this day. The countryside must have seen much fighting, and the frowning Norman keep is one of the largest in England, and there is something singularly touching in the fact that the soldiers of the younger countries rest here, amid the brotherhood of warriors of long ago.

Impressive Ceremony

Mrs. Towsey says on Anzac Day, 1929, the members of the British Legion (Women's Section), Colchester Branch, assembled at the cemetery to pay a tribute to the memory of the men of the overseas Dominions, who came to fight for the British Empire in the Great War, and who lie buried there. A simple but impressive little service was held, and then flowers were placed on each grave. It is proposed to hold this service annually. The graves are carefully tended. The following are the names of the Australians who rest in Colchester Cemetery, and the simple inscriptions on their graves: —

38 651. Gunner C. C. Willcock, Field Artillery. Dec. 25, 1918. Age 38. 'Happy in my lot.'

2 182. Corporal J. P. Byrne, 58th B.N., Australian T.N.F. Jan. 5, 1918. Age 29.

3370. Private H. M. C. D. McIntosh, 3rd B.N., Australian I.N.F. July 12, 1916. Age 18. 'My son, your memory we will cherish, until we follow you.'

1100. Driver R. C. Hendry, Australian Field Artillery. August 9, 1918. Age 25. 'Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.'

6035. Private J. Hought, 6th Bn., Australian Infantry. Nov. 17, 1917. Age 31. 'Thy purpose, Lord, we cannot see; He gave his life that we might live.'

1384. Private W. I. Mackenzie, 51st Bn., Australian Infantry, Aug. 5, 1916. Age 27. 'Gone, but not forgotten.'

10973. Driver W. R. Bennett. Australian Engineers, Nov. 23, 1918.

1906. Private S. E. Barclay, 45th Bn., Australian Inf. April 11, 1918. Age 24.

493. Private F. R. Rankin, 21st Bn. Australian Inf., Sept. 10, 1916. Age 21 'God has saved from weary strife, In its dawn this young, fresh life.'

2413. Driver C. S. McKellar, Australian Engineers, June 18, 1918. Age 25. The dearly-loved son of Mr. and Mrs. McKellar, of Sydney, late of Glasgow.

19477. Sapper H. F. Smith, Australian Engineers, Nov. 5, 1918. Age 31.

Getting in Touch with Relatives

Mrs. Towsey asked Mrs. Florence Muriel Paxman, a member of the Colchester branch, who is visiting Sydney on a holiday trip, to try and get in touch with the Australian relatives of any of these men. In a letter to 'The Chronicle,' Mrs. Paxman says— 'I visited all the graves the day before I left England, and I shall be most happy to give any relatives any further information, or to get them photographs of any particular grave if they will write to me at my address, Winton, New South Head-road, Rose Bay, Sydney.'

Mrs. Towsey's address is Tollgate House, Shrub End, Colchester, and many Australians will remember with gratitude the hospitality that was extended to them there during the war.

(Chronicle, Adelaide, South Australia – 13 March, 1930)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)

Private F. R. Rankin does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

God Has Saved From Weary Strife In Its Dawn This Young Fresh Life

Colchester Cemetery, Colchester, Essex, England

Colchester Cemetery was opened in 1856 and now belongs to the Corporation. It originally covered about 30 acres, but was enlarged in 1940 to 67 acres. The newer part is on the western side of the original burial ground, and behind it is the site of a Roman Way. There are 267 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-1918 war, 1 being unidentified, of which 50 are in the War Plot, while 11 Australian graves are together in a group nearby, the remainder being scattered. After the war a Cross of Sacrifice was erected on a site overlooking both the plot and the group of war graves, in honour of all the servicemen buried here. There are also 114 Commonwealth burials of the 1939-1945 war here, 1 of which is unidentified. In the early months of the 1939-1945 War, shortly after the enlargement of the cemetery, land was set aside in the newer part for service war burials. This is now the War Graves Plot. Among these casualties are men who were killed at sea after being evacuated from Dunkirk. The non-war graves are those of a man of the Merchant Navy and two ex-servicemen who were buried in the War Graves Plot although their deaths were not due to war service. There are also 7 Foreign National burials. The plot is enclosed by a hedge of cotoneaster frigida and a Cross of Sacrifice stands on the western side. The graves are set in level mown turf, with continuous flower borders along the rows of headstones in which are polyantha roses and other seasonal flowers. *(Information from CWGC)*



Colchester Cemetery Entrance *(Photo by Iain MacFarlane – Find a Grave)*



Cross of Sacrifice, Colchester Cemetery (Photo from CWGC)



Australian Plot of World War 1 War Graves, Colchester Cemetery (Photo from CWGC)

Private F. R. Rankin's CWGC Headstone (marked with red arrow)

Photo of Private F. R. Rankin's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Colchester Cemetery, Colchester, Essex, England



(Photo by Andrea Charlesworth)

Welcome to Colchester Cemetery

to Crematorium,
Garden of Remembrance
Office, Toilets, Pay-phone
and Car Park.



YOU ARE HERE



(Photo by Andrea Charlesworth – Find a Grave)