



+ SHOEING SMITH Raymond CHAPPELL
1716 – 1st Light Horse Regiment
12th Reinforcements

Born: 1887, Cumnock.

Parents: William and Elizabeth Chappell

Occupation: Grazier

District Connection: Eurimbla, Cumnock.

Enlistment Date: 5 Aug 1915, Sydney.

Enlistment Age: 27 yrs.

Embarkation: 9 Nov 1915, HMAT Beltana

Served: Egypt

Fate: K.I.A. 13 Jul 1918, Jordan Valley

Honour Boards: Memorial Cemetery, Jerusalem, Israel; National War Museum, Canberra; Cumnock War Memorial Gates; St Paul's Anglican Church, Eurimbla.

Biography

Raymond William Chappell was born in 1887 at Cumnock, the son of William and Elizabeth Chappell.

William Chappell was born in Mudgee in 1847, and married Elizabeth Rosetta Meurant at Mudgee in 1877. The couple moved in 1879 to a selection of 490 acres, which they named 'Kurrajean', at Eurimbla. They raised six children: Effie, Harold, Florence, Maud, Raymond and Stella. They ran a mail-receiving office for many years, and boarded school teachers during the short periods that the Eurimbla School was operating.

William grew wheat and grazed sheep and horses and was very involved with the Eurimbla community. Raymond mostly attended a private school in Wellington as the Eurimbla School was intermittently closed during the 1890s and closed completely for 26 years from 1898. (2) He played cricket and participated in cadet rifle shooting events in Wellington. There are many reports in local newspapers of Raymond being involved in pigeon shooting competitions, the Cumnock Debating Club, Cumnock Coursing Club meetings, and doing well in hunting and horse jumping events in Shows all around NSW.

The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser – 8 Aug 1908, p15 reported that at the 1908 Peak Hill Show, R W Chappell won the following sections: Pony brood mare, 14 hands and under; All-comers hunters - Signal & Monte; Pony hunters – Rene; and High jump – Signal. In the District Hunters event the paper states:

“A regrettable accident occurred in this event, as Mr R W Chappell's Monte struck the rail hard and falling heavily broke his neck, death being instantaneous. Mr Chappell escaped unhurt.”

Raymond was very successful with his horse, Signal. *The Richmond River Herald & Northern Districts Advertiser* - 9 Apr 1909, p6, has the following report.

“At Bathurst Show last week RW Chappell's Signal won the All-comers' Hunt of £25 (with 266 points out of 270); the water jump of £10 (24ft); the high jump of £10 (5ft 11in); the ladies high jump £7; and was second in the lady's hunt. After this magnificent performance the equine was sold for £50!”

The Leader - 9 Sep 1912, p2, reported that during 1912 Signal won over £1021 in prizes at shows all over the State for his new owner, Mr PN Shea. Signal was considered one of the best jumpers in the State.

Raymond, Harold and their father William were active members of the Eurimbla Progress Association. The Chappell family held many social occasions at their shed at 'Kurrajean', with guests attending from surrounding centres.

Aged 27 yrs, Raymond enlisted in the AIF on 5 Aug 1915, at Sydney. He was single, 5ft 8½ inches tall, with grey eyes and brown complexion and hair. He was of the Church of England religious denomination. He served with the 12th Reinforcements, 1st Light Horse Regiment.

The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser – 30 Oct 1915, Eurimbla Incidents p12:

“Pte. R. Chappell, who has volunteered for active service, was entertained at a farewell gathering at his parents’ residence, Eurimbla, last week while on final leave. There was a large gathering of residents of this and surrounding centres present, and the chair was occupied by Mr. F. Bloomfield. The usual toasts were honored, and Mr. F. Bloomfield, on behalf of the residents, presented Pte. Chappell with an inscribed wristlet watch. The recipient suitably returned thanks. During the evening, songs and recitations were given by the following in good style – Messrs. Hughes, Roberts, Munro, Bloomfield, and Misses Meurant and Chappell.”

Pte Chappell embarked from Sydney on HMAT A72 *Beltana* on 9 Nov 1915, with a great send off of coloured ribbons and cheers from the crowd on the wharf. By the time the *Beltana* reached the Great Australian Bight there were cases of mumps and measles on board, and many cases of sea sickness. The voyage was a fair one and the *Beltana* reached Suez on 7 Dec. On disembarking, the troops boarded trains to Cairo.

A letter from Raymond to his parents from Heliopolis, a suburb of Cairo, on 9 Jan 1915, was published in the *Molong Express & Western District Advertiser* on 11 Mar 1916, p 5:

“I have only received two letters so far from home, so have been wondering how things in general are going along at Eurimbla – how the harvest is progressing and so forth. I have come across a few old friends over here and there are a lot of Molong and district men in the first regiment, and Charlie Finch and the two young Coys are here. Charlie Finch got kicked by a horse yesterday, so had to be left behind.

We have been preparing for a six days march - two regiments of us, 1st and 2nd. They will not let us know where it is to, but I think it must be something pretty rough, we have made great preparations. Our saddles are packed with so many things round them that it is a job to get into them, and each one of us has to carry nothing less than 50 rounds of ammunition. You could see nothing nicer than thousands of horses and men marching along. Several aeroplanes sail somewhere in sight of us, nearly every day. Some of our Light Horse men are having a bit of fighting along the Suez Canal.

We – all that left Sydney 9th Nov- had to go through musketry training again over here. I came second top. At Sydney, before I left, out of 200 of us, I was also second top; so I must be able to use a rifle a bit. They had me picked out to go as a sniper, but I declined the position.

It is a strange country over here; I have not seen a blade of grass since I left Sydney. One could spend more than a shilling a day here at times; we are allowed eightpence a day extra to buy tucker with, but I have a few notes of Australian money left yet. The nights are very cold now, but the days are warm.”

A further report in the *Molong & Western District Advertiser*, was published on 18 Mar 1916, p16:

“Trooper RW Chappell, late of Eurimbla, in letters to his sister, Mrs JR Hughes, of Cumnock, written from Wordan [Jordan], Egypt, on Dec 29 and Jan 21 and 28, says: I am doing patrol work as a guard here. Have met a good number that I know, from Molong and Cumnock. I had a look for Charlie Finch, who is here somewhere; but could not find him. Met the two Coy boys (from Two Mile) last night, at 12. They came on guard to relieve me. I have joined Major DA Smith’s Regiment, so he is my officer now. They are all western district chaps with him. We are not allowed to tell you anything about the war news.

All the light horse men are mounted now, and there are some pretty wild horses too. Jack Frogley, of Garra, is in a hospital with a broken foot; not done by a bullet though. His horse fell on a bridge with him. He was in my section.

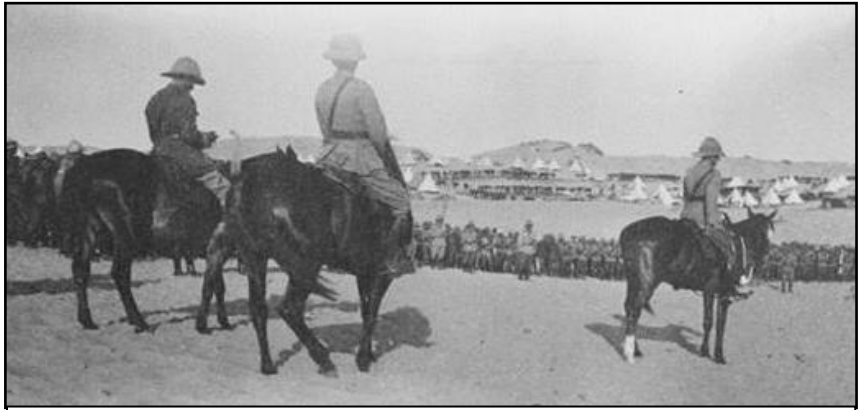
It is pretty quiet here yet, but I do not think it will last long. A troop have to go out and guard us all night. I am writing this on a box of cartridges which I have been guarding all night.

There is plenty of riding to do. The people about here are all niggers, with very curious ways and a language hard to understand. The men wear dresses, and it is hard to tell the difference.

I did not spend a bad Xmas; but New Year’s Day was no good. I was on guard on New Year’s night with C. Finch, once of Cumnock, and one of the Coy boys, of Molong. I met L Stark, J Murray, H Sparkes and E Merriman at Helipolis, where they stopped. I also saw Major Johnston, of Baldry, at Ma’adi. He was telling me he had written to Cumnock stating that he had seen a man named Smith (I think) shot through the head. I saw that man in a hospital at Alexandria, and he was soon sailing for Australia. Anyway, this man’s sister was wearing mourning for him when I left Cumnock. It will be a welcome surprise to her if he reaches Cumnock. The two Gillis’ boys are also there, but I missed seeing them. They were in a remount unit at Ma’adi. You will see people in Egypt with ways as old as you read about in Scripture – the old bullock and wooden plough; and the old woman with an earthenware jug on her head. Write pretty often. You do not know what letters are like away from you all; anything like news is very acceptable.”

Between Jan and May 1916, the 1st LHR was deployed to protect the Nile valley from bands of pro-Turkish Senussi Arabs. On 14 May, it redeployed with its parent brigade to join the forces defending the Suez Canal.

The 1st LHB played a significant role in turning back the Turkish advance on the canal at the battle of Romani on 4 Aug. In ensuing days the Brigades' regiments participated in the immediate follow-up of the defeated Turks, but were soon withdrawn to rest. (3)



General Henry Chauvel, Commander of the ANZAC Mounted Division and Australian forces in Egypt, inspecting the 1st LHB following the Battle of Romani. Aug 1916.

Photo: www.officialcentenary.com

The Molong & Western District Advertiser - 30 Sep 1916, p5:

"Trooper RW Chappell, writing home from Egypt on August 14, says:-

I am still in the land of the living, and quite well. This place has been very lively lately – pretty well a continuous roar of artillery and rifle fire. Our regiment have been in some very solid places, and have come out exceedingly lucky, after making a good name for ourselves. Turks and many Germans with them tried very hard to take our camp. At midnight on August 4th, shots were fired at outposts, and then driven away leaving some thousands of prisoners, and, it is estimated, over a thousand killed, some Germans with Iron Crosses, amongst them. Our losses were quite heavy enough, but nothing like the enemy's. Our camp was heavily shelled by guns and aeroplanes dropping bombs both day and night.

On August 8th we were not quite so lucky. Not quite enough of us tried to do too big a thing; three brigades of mounted men tried to surround Johnny Turk. Well, we did so, but held them only as long as we could. Shells began to fall too heavily amongst our horses so we had to withdraw, after a battle as sharp as anything on the Peninsula [Gallipoli], so old hands say; but I know nothing about that. Our horses had to go sometimes without water for nearly two days, and the weather is very hot. Nearly all our stretcher-bearers were wounded, so I was made one, and I must say I had a very solid day's work for my first day at the game.

My officer, Major Smith, was wounded in the arm, and many others were killed and wounded. I had a narrow escape myself. A couple of small shrapnel leaden bullets got into my haversack; one went into a tin of jam and stopped there. I was going to hang onto the jam tin for a bit of a curio, but at the end there was a hasty retirement, and I lost everything – horse, bandolier (4), and rifle. But I am glad to have helped in it all and thankful to have come through alright.

I have been in a few other scraps, but none like this. D Troop was lucky with men, but unlucky with horses, only having five left out of twenty-five to ride home on. One of my sergeants had three horses blown to pieces, and only received a slight wound himself. It may be quieter for us now for awhile, but I think this is a place the enemy would like to have. Remember me to all my old friends in the district."

On 27 Oct 1916, while at Hod el Ge'eila, Sinai, Raymond was appointed to be a Shoeing Smith. Shoeing Smiths shod horses and did blacksmiths work. The 1st LHR rejoined the Allied advance across the Sinai in Nov 1916 and was subsequently involved in the fighting to secure the Turkish outposts on the Palestine frontier – Maghdaba, on 23 Dec 1916 and Rafa on 9 Jan 1917. A stint of protective duty along the line of communications through the Sinai followed. (3)

The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser – 16 Feb 1918, p3 published the following letter from "Trooper RW Chappell writing home from Palestine on December 10th":-

"Just a line to let you know that I am well. Such a lot has taken place since I last wrote that one is lucky to have got through without a scratch. Have lost some fine old mates. Poor old Sid Maddison was one of them; if you remember he came away with me. No less than five of that little mob who left with me have gone down this last month. I have had my horse shot in a couple of places, but otherwise have done good work. The 1st Regiment has done some fine work; thirty-three hundred and five of us with four machine guns, have made a great advance... We have been over a lot of Palestine; some of us have been in Jaffa,

we had a few hours leave to look round it the other day; there are some fine buildings, but they are much better to look at from a distance."

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S/Smith Chappell reported sick with boils on 15 Apr 1917. He was transferred to the 14 Australian General Hospital (AGH), Cairo on 20 Apr 1917. He was discharged and attached to the 14th AGH. On 22 May 1917 he was readmitted to hospital with fever and rheumatism and spent some time at a convalescent home at Montazah, on the eastern edge of Alexandria. He was discharged to Cairo on 2 Jul, and returned to duty at Abbassia. On 9 Aug he was transferred to the 1st Light Horse Training Regiment at Moascar, and later returned to duty with the 1st LHR on 21 Aug 1917.

Gaza finally fell on 7 Nov, after a wide outflanking move via Beersheba, in which the regiments of the 1st LHB played a part. With the capture of Gaza, the Turkish position in southern Palestine collapsed. The 1st LHR participated in the advance to Jaffa that followed, and was then committed to operations to clear and occupy the west bank of the Jordan River. It was involved in the Amman (24-27 Feb) and Es Salt (30 Apr-4 May) raids and the repulse of a major German and Turkish attack on 14 Jul 1918. (3)

S/Smith Raymond Chappell was killed in action on 13 Jul 1918, aged 31 yrs. Red Cross files (5) have a number of reports of how Raymond was killed. The accounts state that he was 'a popular chap' in the Troop and belonged to 'B' Squadron. On 13 Jul the Regiment was holding the line at Messelabra, about 4 miles east of the Jordan River, and the Turks were shelling them from four points. During the shelling S/Smith Chappell went out to release some horses off the lines when he was hit by fragments of a high explosive shell and killed outright. He was buried the same night near Abu Tullum, Jordan Valley. Despite attempts to locate Raymond's grave in the 1920's, the Imperial War Graves Commission could not locate his body.

S/Smith Raymond Chappell is commemorated on the Memorial to the Missing erected at the War Memorial Cemetery, Jerusalem, Israel; the Roll of Honour at the National War Museum, Canberra; the War Memorial Gates, Cumnock; and in St Paul's Anglican Church, Eurimbla. His parents received his 1914/15 Star, British War, and Victory Medals.

The Molong Express & Western District Advertiser –
7 Sep 1918, p9:

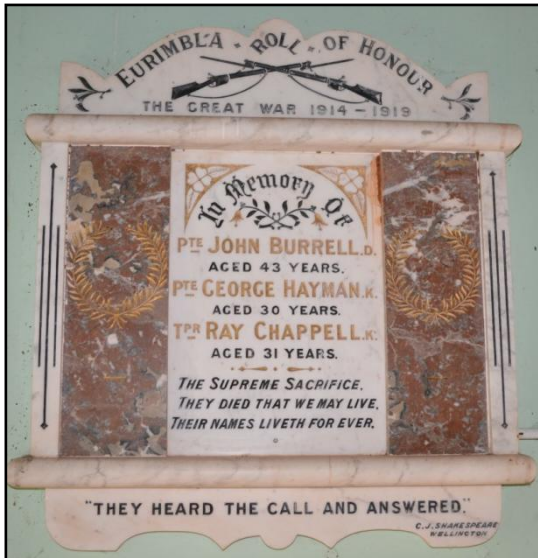
"A very large congregation assembled at St Paul's Church, Eurimbla, on Sunday last, for the special service in memory of the late Pte Raymond Chappell. The Church was appropriately draped in black and purple. The Rev. JA Poole preached a sermon suitable to the occasion. All the deceased soldier's relations were present."

William Chappell died at Kurragean, Eurimbla, on 5 Dec 1926, aged 79yrs. Elizabeth Chappell died in Sydney on 30 Jul 1946, aged 91yrs. William was buried at the Cumnock Cemetery and his tombstone has additional plaques honouring his wife and Raymond.

Endnotes:

1. 'The Crossroads' by Joan Marriott, 1993. Chappell - p38, p62, p71, p157.
2. 'The Seeds of Wisdom' by Joan Marriott, 1979. Eurimbla School – p64, p65, p66.
3. 1st Australian Light Horse Regiment History: <https://www.awm.gov.au/unit/U51035/>
4. A bandolier is a pocketed belt for holding ammunition. It was usually slung sash-style over the shoulder, with the ammunition pockets across the midriff and chest. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bandolier>
5. WW1 Red Cross Files www.awm.gov.au

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***Above: Eurimbla Roll of Honour,
St. Paul's Church, Eurimbla, NSW.***

***Photos of Pte Raymond Chappell
courtesy of Ron Bloomfield, son of
Stella Chappell/Bloomfield & great
nephew of Raymond.***

