Robert Paxton

Private Robert Paxton
19th Battalion, AIF
Service Number: 4202

Born: abt 1895, Glasgow, Scotland .
Died: 14 November 1916, Flers, France

Robert Paxton was born in Glasgow, Scotland in about 1894. In 1901 he was living with his mother and siblings and his stepfather John Morrison in Market Street Glasgow. In 1913, Robert arrived in Sydney with his mother Harriet and his siblings. He is listed as a 19 year old farm labourer. When Paxton enlisted on 6 December 1915, he gave his occupation as engine cleaner. He worked for the NSW Railways in the Loco Department at Penrith Station. His next of kin, his mother, was living in Darling Street Glebe at the time. He was allocated to the 10th Reinforcements, 19th Battalion and embarked on HMAT Orsova on 11 March 1916. After a short stay in Egypt, he left Alexandria aboard the HMT Scotian on 5 May 1916, arriving in Marseilles a week later. He was hospitalised briefly for tonsillitis in June 1916, before rejoining his battalion on 1 August 1916. In October 1916, Paxton was sent to Pigeon School.

Paxton was killed in action on 14 November 1916. A number of soldiers, including Ernest Butcher who had enlisted with his friend Paxton, stated that they were about to go over the top when a shell fell into the trench killing Paxton. They were obliged to leave him and doubted that he would be buried. No trace could be found of his remains and he has no known grave.

When Butcher returned to Australia he visited Paxton's mother to pay his respects. In May 1917 the Nepean Times reported Paxton's portrait was unveiled among a number of deceased soldiers who had been in the railway service. Their portraits were to be later hung in the School of Arts.

He was described as 'a ruddy fair-haired Scot, who had not been very long in Australia, but long enough to endear himself to those who had been acquainted with him. He responded to the Empire's call to arms at the earliest moment, and as they knew, made the great sacrifice, as one who stood by his nation and humanity to the death. (Hear, hear)'.

Memorial Details:
- Villers-Bretonneux, France
- Honour Roll, Memory Park, Penrith

Sources:
- National Archives of Australia: B2455, PAXTON R
- Australian Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing
- Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour
- Penrith City Library Biography files