

## RIDDELL, Alexander Lorimer

Service Number 706968

Rank Lance Sergeant

Canadian Infantry (Central Ontario Regiment) 54<sup>th</sup> Battalion

Born August 16, 1887, Rosehearty, Scotland

Died October 3, 1918, north of Tilloy, France

Occupation Civil engineer

Marital Status Married to Jean Arthur

103 years after his death, Alexander Lorimer Riddell's story remains unexplained. Born in a small coastal Scottish village named Rosehearty, he was the eldest son of George Riddell, a shoemaker who lived on The Square. He attended public school and came to Canada in 1906 at the age of 21.

By the time WWI began, he lived on Vancouver Island. On his attestation papers, he gave his address as Nanoose Bay and said he was a civil engineer. However, he also said that he was born August 16, 1877, at Broken Hill, New South Wales, Australia. He gave his next of kin as stepfather, Donald Riddell, in Lincoln, Nebraska. But he didn't have a stepfather. Why he would choose to provide this misinformation is a curious mystery.

Research shows there were Riddells in both places and Alexander may well have stayed in Lincoln for a time, as there is a newspaper obituary there. The BC Directories list a George Riddell in Nanaimo, working as a blacksmith.

In February 1916, Alexander Riddell joined the 103<sup>rd</sup> Battalion in Nanaimo. In April, he spent six days in hospital in Victoria for a fractured jaw. By the time he arrived in France, he had been transferred to the 54<sup>th</sup> Battalion. He was wounded in the chest 1917; granted leave and returned to Rosehearty to marry in December. Returning to the front, he received promotions to corporal and then to lance sergeant.

On September 30, 1918, he received multiple wounds from machine gun bullets and was transferred to No. 23 Casualty Clearing Station. Alexander Lorimer Riddell died of his wounds on October 3, 1918. He is buried at Duisans British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. His wife chose his epitaph from a poem by Rudyard Kipling – "Not since her birth has this earth seen such worth loosed upon her."

Sources: Photo: Forces War Records.co.uk / de ruvignys roll of honour  
Personnel Records of the First World War, Library and Archives Canada  
Books of Remembrance, Veterans Affairs Canada  
Circumstances of Death Registers, Library and Archives Canada  
Wikipedia

