

## **Major William Tomkinson, DSO**

**1888 - 1923**

William Tomkinson was the only son of Mr George Tomkinson of Cumberland Street, Cabramatta. He had a distinguished Military career, graduating as a Batchelor of Arts at Sydney University. In 1908 he joined the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery (RAGA) and by August 1909 his work at the School of Gunnery and as a Company Officer indicated significant promise for a brilliant future.

In January 1914 he was transferred to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Military District Victoria as Adjutant of the RAGA. On the outbreak of WWI, he was appointed Staff Officer to the Officer Commanding the Port Phillip Defended Port, a duty he continued to perform until the formation of the Australian Siege Brigade in May 1915. He was posted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Siege Battery as senior Subaltern and on completion of the training of the Brigade at Lydd, Kent, he proceeded to France with his unit in February 1916. In April of the same year, he was appointed Adjutant of the 36<sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Brigade. In December that year, he was promoted and transferred to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Siege Battery as Battery Captain. He later commanded the 110<sup>th</sup> Howitzer Battery Field Artillery and served in the Headquarters of the 4<sup>th</sup> Divisional Artillery until the end of the war. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and twice Mentioned in Despatches.

On his return to Australia, Major Tomkinson resumed duty as Company Officer RAGA 2<sup>nd</sup> Military District. In September 1920 he was posted to England to attend a Gunnery Staff Course. There he topped the Coast Artillery portion of the course and showed a great brilliance generally. On returning to Australia, he was appointed Chief Instructor, Artillery Schools of Instruction, South Head.

At around 3.30pm on 20 August 1923, two fishermen from Watsons Bay upon returning to port from the Shoalhaven River, picked up the body of a man which was identified as that of William Tomkinson. He was 35. Earlier that day, a telephone message was received at the School of Gunnery from Major Tomkinson advising that he would not attend that day because he was ill.

Major Tomkinson had lived at Watsons Bay with his wife Flora and two children, William and Joan. On 22 August, after a funeral at South Head Barracks, he was interred at South Head Cemetery with full military honours. A Majors firing party of 50 men, commanded by Major C. A. Kelly preceded the cortege followed by the Fire Brigade Band. The Gun Carriage bearing the coffin was covered with a Union Jack and William's charger with his riding boots reversed was led in the cortege.

### **Acknowledgments:**

- Compiled from extracts from the Sydney Moring Herald 21 August 1923.