

WITTS, Russell Gordon



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Studio portrait of Bombardier Russell Gordon
Witts

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Russell Gordon Witts was born in 1890 at Bombala, NSW, to parents Edwin John Witts and Rachel nee Rankin. Russell's siblings were Maud M b.1888, Edrich Leigh b.1894 (recorded in both Russell's and Edrich's service records), Aubrey Elwyn b.1895, Violet b.1896, Doris A b.1898, Gladys M.R. b.1901, and Lorna L b.1908.

Russell was 18 years old when he entered HAC in 1908, was a member of the Ambulance Class, and gained the First Year Certificate.

Russell was a member of the College Rifle Club 1908-1909- achieving a marksmen's badge. He also gained a Diploma and Burdekin Medal in 1909.

Russell leased a small farm near Parkes from his father, a Surveyor at Parkes NSW in December 1909 where he grew wheat, lucerne, fruit and had poultry.

The November 1912 Journal reported Russell "...is still on his father's place of some 3,000 acres, about seven miles from Parkes. About 800 acres are ready for the plough, and 300 acres are under wheat and 50 under lucerne. At present he is cutting hay, the crop running from 30 cwt. to two tons per acre. Fifteen acres are under orchard and vineyard. Apples do well, and among other fruits he is trying are peaches, apricots, plums, nectarines, cherries, mulberries, figs and pears, in addition to 1,500 grapes, mostly for wine".

Russell enlisted on 30 January 1915 in the 12th Light Horse Regiment, A Squadron, and embarked 13 June 1915 from Sydney, NSW aboard HMAT A29 Suevic.

Originally a Private, Russell became a Bombardier in the 5th Division Trench Mortar Battery, Australian Field Artillery.

A cable received by the College stated Russell and his brother were quite well in France and that, having just returned from a Trench Mortar School Russell was now engaged in trench mortar work (January 1917 HAC Journal).

Russell wrote to the College in 1917 and 1918 (Aug 1917 & March 1918 Journals) thanking the College for the comforts parcels they had sent him. In the 1918 letter Russell also spoke of having seen Hector Dargin of the Vet Corps, a HAC Old Boy and Champion Athlete of 1911.

Serving at Gallipoli from August 1915 until the evacuation, and then on the Western Front, wounded in action twice, Russell was admitted to hospital at the end of October 1918 with influenza and died of pneumonia on 2 November 1918. Russell was 29 years old and is buried in St. John's Churchyard, Sutton Veny, Wiltshire, England.

Edric Leigh Witts enlisted in the 12th Light Horse Regiment, 1st Reinforcement on 6 April 1915. Serving at Gallipoli, France and Belgium and promoted to Lieutenant, Edric returned to Australia 23 September 1919 and died in April 1921.

Aubrey Elwin Witts, a Stock & Station Agent who had been a Cadet at North Shore Grammar School, enlisted in the Field Artillery Brigade 1, Battery 3 on 24 August 1914. Serving at Gallipoli and France, Aubrey commenced Officer Cadet School in July 1918 and returned to Australia 20 June 1919.