

# CHICHESTER IN THE GREAT WAR

**Second Lieutenant William Stephen Rousell, 1.10.1890 – 8.8.1918**

**Nicholas Shaw**

## **Introduction**

William Stephen Rousell was 27 years of age when he died leading his men at Amiens on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1918. I wanted to explore his connection with the City of Chichester.

## **Biography**

William Stephen Rousell was born on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1890 in the small village of North Somercotes, Lincolnshire. He was the eldest of three children, the father William Richard Rousell being a Labourer and his mother Elizabeth Fanny, a housewife. He had a brother James, aged 3 in the 1901 Census and a sister Ethel, aged 6 in the same census. The village has an Anglican Church of St. Mary which is Grade I listed and is known as the 'Marshland' Church. William Richard had married Elizabeth Fanny Taylor in 1884, in the Westhampnett district.

By the census of 1901, the family had moved to Chichester and resided at No.23, Green Lane, Portfield, Chichester. William Stephen was educated at the nearby Oliver Whitby School and left in 1904 aged almost 14 years of age.

At the age of 23 he enlisted at Bolton on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1914, with the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, with 'C' company. He had been living at 9 Crawford Avenue, Bolton at this time. He was based at Fulwood Barracks, his regimental number was 2327. On February 12<sup>th</sup> 1915, he embarked for Southampton and travelled across the Channel to France. By 28<sup>th</sup> March 1915 he was a Lance Corporal and was based at Armentieres. On 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1915 he was promoted to Corporal and was also transferred to 'D' company. By 17<sup>th</sup> March 1916, he became a Lance/Sergeant and by 21<sup>st</sup> April 1916, he became a Sergeant. He was now transferred to 'C' company. By 16<sup>th</sup> December 1916, he was being interviewed for a commission in the army and purchased a commission on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1917 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment. He was a Second Lieutenant and was attached with the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion and involved in the victorious battle of Amiens which had commenced on the 8<sup>th</sup> August 1918. He was killed in action on this day and his regiment played an important role of defeating the Germans at Amiens by the 12<sup>th</sup> August 1918. 6 Officers including Rousell were killed during this five day battle, including C. P. Burley, a close friend and colleague.



William Stephen Rousell was buried at the Beacon Cemetery, at Saily-Laurette. He was 27 years of age when he died.

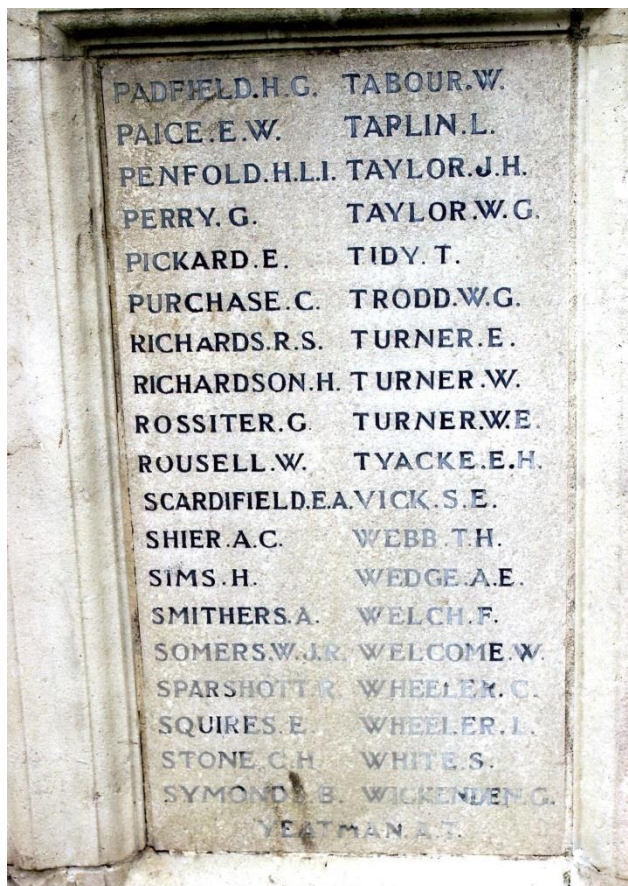
He is commemorated on the memorial at St. George's Rumboldswyke, Portfield Memorial and Chichester City Memorial, at St. Pancras Road (The Litten Gardens), Chichester.

He was 5ft in height and had a 38" chest, with blue eyes and fair complexion. Before he enlisted he had been a window dresser in a tailoring firm in Chichester. His will ensured that his father William Richard received £209 15s 10d on his death. By 1939, William Richard and Elizabeth Fanny were living at 18 Cottenham Road, Worthing. William was described as a Naval pensioner. William Richard died at St Richard's Hospital on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1945.

William Stephen Rousell was entitled to receive the Victory Medal and the British War Medal.

### Conclusion

He had fought valiantly in the early stage of the Battle of Amiens, which later turned out to be a great allied victory against the Germans. William's father had moved to Chichester from Lincolnshire by the early part of the twentieth century and thus William's connection with the City of Chichester had commenced. He had attended school at Oliver Whitby's in Chichester and so had spent much of his youth growing up in the town.



## **Sources**

WO339/90259 Kew Archives

[www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) (Family details)

[www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org) (Cemetery details)

