

= Blair Swannell =

Major Blair Inskip Swannell (20 August 1875 ? 25 April 1915) was an English @-@ born international rugby union forward who played club rugby for Northampton , and internationally for the British Isles and later Australia . He was invited to tour with the British Isles on their 1899 tour of Australia and then their 1904 tour of Australia and New Zealand . He played a total of seven Test matches on these tours , and scored one Test try ? against Australia during the 1904 tour . After settling in Australia , Swannell played a single game for his new home when they faced New Zealand . He was viewed as a violent player , and this made him unpopular with other players . Former Australian captain Herbert Moran said of him that " ... his conception of rugby was one of trained violence " .

During the Second Boer War , Swannell served in the British Army in South Africa , rising to the rank of lieutenant . During the First World War he joined the Australian Imperial Force and was appointed with the rank of major , serving with the 1st Battalion . He was killed on 25 April 1915 while taking part in the Landing at Anzac Cove , during the first day of the Gallipoli Campaign .

= = Personal history = =

Swannell was born in Weston Underwood , Buckinghamshire on 20 August 1875 to William and Charlotte Swannell , and was the third child of at least five siblings . His father was a farmer , who ran a 423 @-@ acre (1 @.@ 71 km2) farm which employed 17 adults and children . He was home schooled as an infant before beginning his formal education at Repton School . After leaving school he attended the Thames Nautical Training College where he gained qualifications as a second mate . He remained single throughout his life .

In 1897 he made his first visit to Australia , as a mate on a schooner . On his return to Britain , Swannell joined the British Army and served in South Africa during the Second Boer War , where he was commissioned as a lieutenant in the 35th Battalion (Buckinghamshire) Imperial Yeomanry on 20 January 1902 . He retained the rank of honorary lieutenant when he resigned his commission on 3 February 1903 . It was reported that during his time in South Africa , he was personally recommended on the field for a commission by General Lord Methuen .

Swannell was a keen self @-@ promoter , claiming a number of exploits that were so abounding , that his adventures were " too numerous to be recorded " . These claims included : fighting among the insurrectionists in Uruguay , to have hunted seal down the South American coast and around Cape Horn as well as Labrador , and to have played rugby in France , Germany , South Africa , India and North and South America . Many of these claims are unsubstantiated . One claim that is problematic , was made by the Fielding Star newspaper in 1909 , that he took part in the Cape Frontier war . This cannot be a reference to the Xhosa Wars as the last of that series of wars ended in 1879 , when he was merely the age of four . An article from 1925 , claimed he represented Wales and Argentina .

After touring Australia with the British Isles team for the second time in 1904 , he settled in Sydney . A keen all @-@ round sportsman he coached not only rugby but also hockey , was vice @-@ president of the Sydney Swimming Club , and training senior military cadets for surf life @-@ saving examinations . He also joined the Australian Militia , and by 1914 had reached the rank of captain and had passed the promotion exams for the rank of major .

= = Rugby career = =

Swannell played as a forward , and in his last Test specifically at number eight . He was an unconventional and hard rugby player , known for his violent play . He would turn up for training in unwashed kit , and wore the same pair of breeches for every game , again unwashed . His poor personal hygiene and overly violent playing style , made him an unpopular character in the eyes of other players .

Swannell first came to note as a rugby player when he represented English club team Northampton

. It was while with Northampton that Swannell was invited to tour with Matthew Mullineux 's British Isles team , on their 1899 tour of Australia . Swannell played in 17 matches of the tour including three of the four Tests against the Australian national team , missing only the opening defeat . Swannell scored in only one game on the tour , a try in a win over the New South Wales Waratahs on 29 July 1899 .

Swannell returned to Britain with the touring team , and was reselected for the 1904 tour , this time taking in Australia and New Zealand . Swannell played in 15 games , including all four Test Matches , three against Australia and the final Test against New Zealand . In the third Test , Swannell scored his first and only international points , a try against Australia in Sydney . The British Isles were victorious over the Australians , but lost the New Zealand match , this was the first international game that Swannell had been on the losing side . In the New Zealand clash , Swannell 's violent playing style , was targeted by countering with equally rough play . He left the field at the end of the match with two black eyes , and bleeding , but with his spirit undaunted .

When the touring British team returned home after the 1904 campaign , Swannell along with team @-@ mates David Bedell @-@ Sivright , and Dr. Sidney Crowther decided to remain in Australia , to begin new lives , although Crowther later returned to England . Swannell joined club team Northern Suburbs , based in Sydney . In 1905 he was selected to play for the Australian national team , even though he had already faced them as an opponent on six occasions . The match was against New Zealand , and was the first overseas tour the Australians had undertaken ; Australia lost 14 ? 3 . Wallaby captain Herbert Moran didn 't mince words when speaking of Swannell in Viewless Winds saying " Swannell was , for a number of years , a bad influence in Sydney football ... his conception of rugby was one of trained violence "

With his playing career behind him , Swannell continued his involvement with the sport by coaching at youth and school level , namely at St Joseph 's College where he coached the team to a number of championships . He was an advocate for team training and in particular for forwards to rehearse scrummaging and break @-@ down techniques . He argued that the forwards won or lost the game . In 1909 , he became Secretary of the Metropolitan Rugby Union , and in 1910 the club raised his salary from £ 200 to £ 250 . Financial stress on the club lead him to resign in 1911 to save expense , but he continued in an ' honorary position ' . He also served as a referee from 1911 to 1914 , earning praise for his ability to control the game .

While in Australia , Swannell was often approached by the sporting press for his opinion on rugby matters . Particularly on clashes between British and Antipodean teams , including the 1905 New Zealand tour . He was vocal in his support for maintaining the amateur nature of rugby , but did not side with Bedell @-@ Sivright in denying that a stipend had been paid during the 1904 tour . In 1908 he was also hired to write a series of articles for the Star on the topic of forward play , and scrummaging .

= = Gallipoli and death = =

With the outbreak of the First World War , Swannell enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force , was appointed to the rank of major and posted to Egypt , travelling on the SS Afric . In April 1915 , Swannell was part of the Australian forces sent to partake in the Gallipoli Campaign ; an attempt to capture the Ottoman city of Istanbul . Swannell and his men from D Company of the 1st Battalion , transported on the troopship SS Minewasska , landed at the peninsula on 25 April , and were immediately involved in heavy fighting after being diverted to reinforce the 12th Battalion . In the buildup to the assault on the hill known as Baby 700 , Swannell and his men were pinned down under heavy enemy fire , and while attempting to show his men the best method of aiming their rifles , he was shot in the head and killed . He is commemorated at Baby 700 Cemetery in Gallipoli , and also with a plaque on the walls at Weston @-@ Underwood church in Buckinghamshire .

In April 2015 for the centenary of the Gallipoli landings , fellow Northampton Saints and England rugby international Ben Foden , was featured narrating tributes to Swannell on both BBC TV regional news and Radio Northampton . Foden penned and read the following message at the grave of Blair Swannell in Turkey :

From the turf of Franklin 's Gardens where you stood ,
To the shores of Gallipoli where you fell ,
A truer Saintsman I know not ,
Forever bleeding green , black and gold .
Rest in peace