

Basil Rathbone – Captain – 2nd/10th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment (Liverpool Scottish)



Philip St. John Basil Rathbone MC was born on 13th June 1892 in Johannesburg South Africa and raised in Derbyshire. He was the son of Edgar Philip and Anna Barbara Rathbone (George). Basil was the great-grandson of the noted Victorian philanthropist, William Rathbone V, and thus a descendant of William Rathbone II.

The Rathbones fled to Britain when Basil was three years old after his father was accused by the Boers of being a spy following the Jameson Raid. Rathbone attended Repton School in Derbyshire from 1906 to 1910, where he excelled at sports and was given the nickname "Ratters" by schoolmates. Thereafter, he was briefly employed as an insurance clerk by the Liverpool and Globe Insurance Companies, to appease his father's wish for him to have a conventional career.

On 22 April 1911, Rathbone made his first appearance on stage at the Theatre Royal, Ipswich, Suffolk, as Hortensio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, with his cousin Sir Frank Benson's No. 2 Company, under the direction of Henry Herbert. In October 1912, he went to the United States with Benson's company, playing roles such as Paris in *Romeo and Juliet*, Fenton in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and Silvius in *As You Like It*. Returning to Britain, he made his first appearance in London at the Savoy Theatre on 9 July 1914, as Finch in *The Sin of David*. That December, he appeared at the Shaftesbury Theatre as the Dauphin in *Henry V*. During 1915, he toured with Benson and appeared with him at London's Court Theatre in December as Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

During the First World War (in 1915), Rathbone was called up via the Derby Scheme into the British Army as a private with the London Scottish Regiment, joining a regiment that also included his future professional acting contemporaries Claude Rains, Herbert Marshall and Ronald Colman at different points during the conflict. After basic training with the London Scots in early 1916, he received a commission as a lieutenant in the 2/10th Battalion of the King's Liverpool Regiment (Liverpool Scottish), where he served as an intelligence officer, eventually attaining the rank of captain.

Rathbone was deeply affected by the news that his younger brother John, a captain in the Dorsetshire Regiment, had been killed in action near Arras on 4 June 1918 and following his brother's death, he appears to have become unconcerned about the dangers of serving at the front. He persuaded his superiors to allow him to scout enemy positions during daylight rather than at night, as was the usual practice to minimise the chance of detection. Rathbone wore a special camouflage suit that resembled a tree with a wreath of freshly plucked foliage on his head, and with burnt cork applied to his hands and face. As a result of these highly dangerous daylight

reconnaissance missions in September 1918 he was awarded the Military Cross for "conspicuous daring and resource on patrol".

Rathbone married actress Ethel Marion Foreman (1887–1976) in 1914. They had one son, Rodion Rathbone (1915–1996), who had a brief Hollywood career under the name John Rodion. The couple divorced in 1926. In the same year, he married writer Ouida Bergère; their infant child died in 1928. In 1939, the couple adopted a daughter, Cynthia Rathbone (1939–1969).

Following the war Basil continued his acting career, making more than seventy movies, including in his famous role as Sherlock Holmes in fourteen films and he became an established Hollywood star.

Rathbone died suddenly of a heart attack in New York City on 21 July 1967 at the age of 75. His body was interred in a crypt in the Shrine of Memories Mausoleum at Ferncliff Cemetery in Hartsdale, New York.



Name	Corps	Rank	Regt. No.
RATHBONE	April R	lieut	
P.O.C. J.B (MC)			
Medal	Roll	File	Remarks
VICTORY	4/149	68	} J.V.B/607 4/7/30x
BORDER			
STAR			
GEN. S.			
	France		
	29-4-18		
			* Nov/3/1959