



In Memory of  
**Sergeant**  
**WILLIAM DOYLE HOBSON**

**1855**, 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Australian Infantry A.I.F.  
who died age 27  
on 16 August 1916

Son of William Doyle Hobson, and Edith Emily Hobson.  
Born at Cairns, Queensland

Remembered with honour  
VILLERS-BRETONNEUX MEMORIAL, FRANCE



SERGEANT  
**WILLIAM DOYLE HOBSON**

49<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY BATTALION  
SERVICE NUMBER: 1855



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL P03452.028

The service career of **William Doyle Hobson** began less than ten days after the outbreak of war. He may have been one of the first men on the Mothers' Memorial to be officially on active service (see also Lowe F.W.). William was living in Cairns and working as a cane farmer when he was mobilised on 14 August 1914 for the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force "to take part in the capture of German New Guinea". One document even states that he embarked at Cairns on 8 August for garrison duty at Thursday Island. It seems from present research that four men on the Memorial took some part in this expedition; they were certainly the first to go to war from Australia.

William was born in Toowoomba and was educated at Toowoomba Grammar School (grad. 1907). He was the only son of William Doyle (senior) and Edith Emily Hobson. By 1914 his father had died and his mother, and a married sister, Mrs L. Walker, were living in Cairns. William's service with the New Guinea expedition turned out to be anti-climactic. He certainly did not see combat. His file states that he "returned to Townsville on 18.9.14 on account of the trouble caused by the firemen on the troopship. Did not participate in the capture of German N.G."

William quickly set about joining the AIF. He returned to Cairns and enlisted on the last day of the year. On 8 January he had reached Brisbane and went into camp at Enoggera where he was posted to the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion. William was a valued recruit; he was keen and fit, almost 6'2" tall, weighing 164 pounds. He had a dark complexion, grey eyes, black hair and was of the Church of England religion. He sailed from Brisbane on 8 April 1915 aboard the A15 *Star of England*. He arrived in Egypt after the original 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion landed at Gallipoli, but he was soon headed for the Peninsula as a reinforcement.

William landed at Gallipoli on 30 May; for the next three months he served at ANZAC, surviving the daily risks of shell and bullet. He was promoted to corporal in July. On 6 September, having lived through the August offensive, he succumbed to illness and was evacuated to Mudros, the hospital base at Lemnos Island, then on to Alexandria. However, he recovered quickly and was returned to Gallipoli on 17 November for the last month of the campaign.

Landing in Egypt for the third time in eight months William became part of the re-organisation of the AIF for the campaigns in France and Palestine. He was transferred to the new 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion at Habeita on 25 February 1916 and a week later was promoted to sergeant. He sailed for France with his new unit on 5 June. The 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion was part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division; half its men were Gallipoli veterans, like William. The men travelled by train to the reserve areas for the Battle of Pozieres, the Australian role in the wider Somme campaign. The 4<sup>th</sup> Division attacked at Mouquet Farm on 8 August. Again, William survived. However, between 13 and 16 August the 49<sup>th</sup> was in the front-line at Pozieres and in a relatively quiet period conducted low-level operations to improve the trenches. In four days 21 men of the battalion were killed. On 16 August William Hobson was reported killed in action; two days later his CO recommended him for a decoration for his conduct with the citation:

*'The gallant conduct of this NCO who throughout the intense enemy bombardment of front lines on night of 15<sup>th</sup> Aug stuck to the observation post, the observer whom he sent into safety knowing the tremendous risk and mental strain the post demanded, he was subsequently killed at his post.'*

William's mother moved to Milton in Brisbane soon after he died where she received his personal effects. By 1922, however, when the symbolic mementoes from the government were delivered to families, his sister, Lucille Walker, living in Cairns wrote to the army with the information that both their parents were deceased and that she was now William's NOK. His plaque and scroll came to her along with his service medals. William's posthumous decoration never came through from the hierarchy. He has no known grave and is commemorated at Villers-Bretonneux Memorial. He was 27 years old.

Toowoomba Grammar School Archive Records state that he started school on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1903 and left on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1904. In the School Magazine of May 1917, Hobson was included in the Honour Roll and his photograph was published. Sergeant Philip Eric Devine who served with the 49th Battalion, was an Old Boy from the school and also died on 13th August 1916.

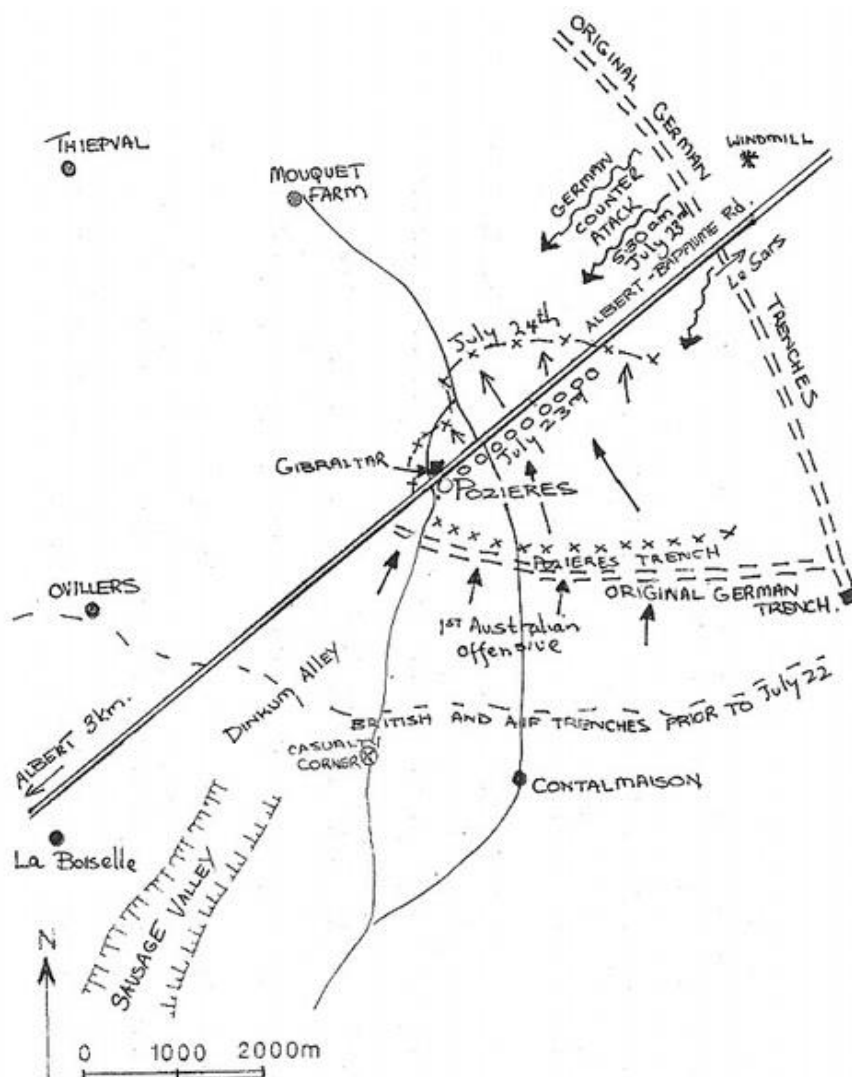
### External Links:

[National Archives of Australia Military Records](#)

[CWGC](#)

[Australian War Memorial Honour Roll](#)

[AWM4 AIF unit war diaries 23/66/3 49th BN August 1916](#)



Map of Pozières in July 1916



*Flat landscape behind Mouquet Farm looking back towards Poziere – taken by Ann Hallam in 2015*