



In Memory of
Private
FRANCIS WILLIAM LITTLE
6658, 26TH Battalion, A.I.F.
who died age 22
on 2 September 1918

Son of Robert and Mary Little. Born at Brisbane, Queensland.

Remembered with honour
VILLERS-BRETONNEUX MEMORIAL, FRANCE



PRIVATE

FRANCIS WILLIAM LITTLE

26TH BN, A.I.F.

SERVICE NUMBER: 6658

A graduate of the Toowoomba Grammar School in 1898, **Francis William Little** has an interesting story somewhat typical of a single man of that era of the first decades of the twentieth century. When he enlisted in Brisbane in January 1917 he stated that he was 35 years old, single and a labourer. He also stated that he was born at Charters Towers and nominated a sister Mrs Catherine Ann Barry of Coorparoo in Brisbane as his NOK. However, the story is rather more complex. The CWGC files have his birthplace as Brisbane and his parents named as Robert and Mary Little also of Brisbane.

When Mrs Barry replied to the historian's circular in the 1920s, she gave more information: she stated that Francis was born at Ravenswood in NQ; that he was a clerk in the civil service; his brother (Edward Michael) served in the 9th Battalion from 1914 to 1919 unwounded, and that his parents were no longer living. In further correspondence she indicated that he had a brother in Ruthven St, Toowoomba (actually at Oakey) and a sister at Kangaroo Point in Brisbane. The image is of a family scattered and although closely-bonded, finding it difficult to keep up with each other, given communications of that time.

Francis' service history is similarly complicated. He initially enlisted in early 1915 but found he could not settle into army life and after a couple of months' training he committed some indiscretions and was granted a discharge. But from January 1917 he was more committed and became a typical Digger, although a decade older than the average. His medical states that he was 6' tall, 150 pounds, with a medium complexion, blue eyes and brown hair, and was a Roman Catholic. He trained at Enoggera until posted to the 26th Battalion Reinforcements (19/26th) and then sailed from Sydney aboard A18 *Wiltshire* on 8 February 1917. He trained in England from April to October and then sailed across the Channel to be "taken on strength" by his battalion in Belgium, near the battlefield at Ypres. Francis' active service was almost unblemished (one minor charge and two minor episodes of illness), for the next eleven months. During this time, he may well have caught up with younger brother Edward who served in 9th Battalion, in a different division (the 9th was in 1st Division and the 26th in 2nd Division), although there is no mention of this in the files.

Francis was killed in action at Peronne in the Somme Valley on 2 September 1918, aged 38. He has no known grave; his name is therefore inscribed on the Australian Monument at Villers-Bretonneux. Francis died on a day that is significant in the history of the AIF in the War – the day the Australians continued the taking of Peronne and Mont St Quentin on the Somme River, feats thought to be impossible by the high command in the week before their attack.

Post-war, Francis' medals were allotted to brother John at Oakey, sister Mary was the beneficiary of his will and Catherine shared his mementoes with her siblings.

Toowoomba Grammar School Archive Records state that he started at school on 3rd February 1895 and left on 20th December 1897.

External Links:

[Australian War Memorial Honour Roll](#)

[CWGC](#)

[National Archives of Australia Military Records](#)

[AWMF AIF war unit diaries 23/43/38 26th BN Sept 1918](#)