

Biography- Captain Francis Ryan Smith, MC, DFC,



CAPTAIN F. R. SMITH, D.F.C.



LIEUT. F. R. SMITH,

On 1st July 1919, an astute Brisbane Daily Mail reporter introduced Captain Francis Ryan Smith to Queenslanders as one of their Great War hero's. As a young man, still with boyish features, despite four years of service under conflict, he still had the desire, determination and humility which saw him awarded military honours and promotion. To quote the article "What is the centre decoration, may I ask?" The young fair-haired soldier in a Captain's uniform, seated in a Brisbane café, flushed a little as he replied quietly. "The Distinguished Flying Cross."

The reporter inquired further stating; "There have not been many come to Queensland, evidently, for that, is the first I have seen, and I am greatly interested in decorations." "And I see you have the Military Cross, too."

Frank Smith had to admit that he had the honour to wear the highly coveted DFC medal, though he explained "There are dozens of chaps coming back with nothing to show, who have done just as good work, but had not the luck. Cleverer flyers and better shots have gone up day after day with never a Hun on the line. It was just my luck that any old time I went out I could always buy a fight of some sort. Then I had the luck to get out all right, and that is how it is." He was just as matter of fact and nonchalant, as if he were referring to a football match or dust-up with the boys at school, when referring to his award of the Military Cross for his actions on a night raid at Armentieres. In fact he was one of the few men to be awarded a Military Cross for ground operations and the Distinguished Flying Cross which was introduced as an award for airborne operations.

Francis Ryan was the fourth son of William Henry and Bridget Teresa (nee Ryan) Smith of Toowoomba, born 23rd Jul 1896.

Miss Bridget Ryan (born 29th Sep 1869) was associated with All Hallows School, Brisbane as a student and in a musical capacity. She was an accomplished singer and performed at the All Hallows Christmas concerts.

On 10th Oct 1888 Bridget married William Henry Smith at St Stephens Cathedral, Brisbane. They were to have the following children; William 'George' George b.2nd Nov 1889 – d.8th Feb 1925; James 'Reg' Reginald of Dalby P.O. b.9th May 1891 – d.29th May 1942; Philip Claver Aloysius b. 14th Oct 1894 at Kangaroo Point, Qld (was a Priest in Rome during WW1 and later in Hammad St, Palmyra, Fremantle, WA); Francis Ryan b. 23rd Jul 1896, Vincent Patrick b.21st Mar 1899 & d.25th Oct 1899; Joseph Evington b. 27th Feb 1904.

Whilst raising their young family William and Bridget successfully ran the Union Hotel in Toowoomba around 1900. In April 1903, Bridget undertook the lease on the newly constructed Crown Hotel on the corner of Margaret and Neill Streets, Toowoomba. This £3500 hotel was finely constructed and as well as providing

tastefully decorated bars and dining salons, had 16 rooms of accommodation. Mrs Smith was determined to run it on the most modern lines of the time.



Unfortunately family tragedy occurred with Bridget dying on 26th January 1908, aged 38 years.

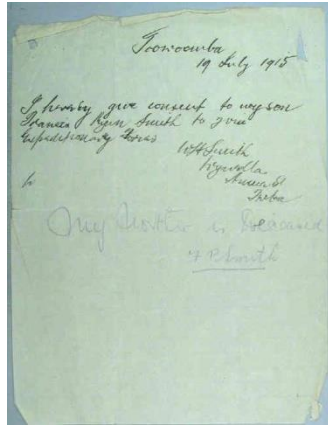
William was now faced with raising George, Reg, Philip, Frank and Joseph on his own. It is presumed that William let the hotel lease lapse and the boys attended boarding school with further family support from Bridget's sister Annie Power, who was also raising a young family at this time. William gave his address throughout the war years as the Catholic Club, Toowoomba. William Henry Smith is believed to have died in the 1920s. (1924 or 1927).



Christian Brothers School, Toowoomba, c 1902

Having inherited his mother's musical abilities, Frank's fine singing voice was encouraged and he sang in the Toowoomba Eisteddfods in his youth. He was educated at the Christian Brothers' school in Toowoomba and Nudgee College, Boondall, Brisbane, being considered as an above average student. Upon leaving school, c1912, he was employed as a Bank Clerk in the Royal Bank of Queensland.

On 19th July 1915 at the age of 19 Frank's father granted his consent and he enlisted in the A.I.F. on 30th July 1915 – at the time he stood 5 foot 9 inches tall and weighed 127 pounds, with a chest measurement of 32 inches (35 expanded). He had blue eyes, fair hair and a fair complexion.



Thus Frank was an early member of 'A' Company (being allocated regimental number 298) of the newly formed 31st Battalion at the Enoggera Camp, Brisbane. He obviously thrived with the army routines and with the organisation of this newly formed battalion. The daily routine was as follows:-

All Duties and Guards to mount at 5.30 am.

Reveille	6.30 am.
Dress for Parade	6.45 am.
Fall in	6.50 am.
Early morning parade	7.00 am.
Tent Orderlies	7.50 am.
Breakfast	8.00 am.
Sick parades	7.15 am. & 4.30 pm.
Dress for parade	8.45 am.
Markers	8.50 am.
Second parade	9.00 am.
Tent Orderlies	11.50 am.
Dinner	12.00 noon
Dinner - Officers	12.30 pm.
Dress for parade	1.30 pm.
Markers	1.35 pm.
Afternoon parade	1.45 pm.
Tent Orderlies	4.50 pm.
Tea	5.00 pm.
Retreat	5.30 pm.
First Post	9.00 pm.
Last Post	9.30 pm.
Lights Out	10.00 pm.

Buglers are to observe punctuality in Sounding calls and must take up calls promptly.

On 14th, 15, 16th September 1915, Frank attended and was successful in obtaining a pass in the Sergeant's promotion examination held at Rifle Range Camp. On 16th September 1915, Frank's promotion was confirmed and the structure of NCOs for 'A' and 'B' Coys was as follows:

C.Q.M.S. Spiers to be R.Q.M.S. and transferred from "B" Coy to Reg. Headquarters Staff.

A/Sergt. Shepherd J. to be Sergt. M.G. Section, 31st Battalion

Corpl. Ketch C.E. to be Corporal M.G. Section, 31st Battalion

Sergt. Gair I.N. to be C.S. Major, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion

Corpl. Adams A.E. to be C.Q.M.S. "A" Coy, 31st Battalion

Pte. McKay C.L. to be Sergeant, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion

a/Sergt. Bradford G.L. to be Sergeant, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion

Pte. Law F. to be Sergeant, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion

Pte. Kent E.R. to be Sergeant, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion

a/Sergt. Smith F.R. to be Sergeant, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion

Pte. Jenns H.C. to be Sergeant, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion

a/Sergt. Davis L.A. to be Sergeant, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion

Pte. Erickson W.W. to be Sergeant, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion

a/Corpl. Casey V. to be Corporal, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion

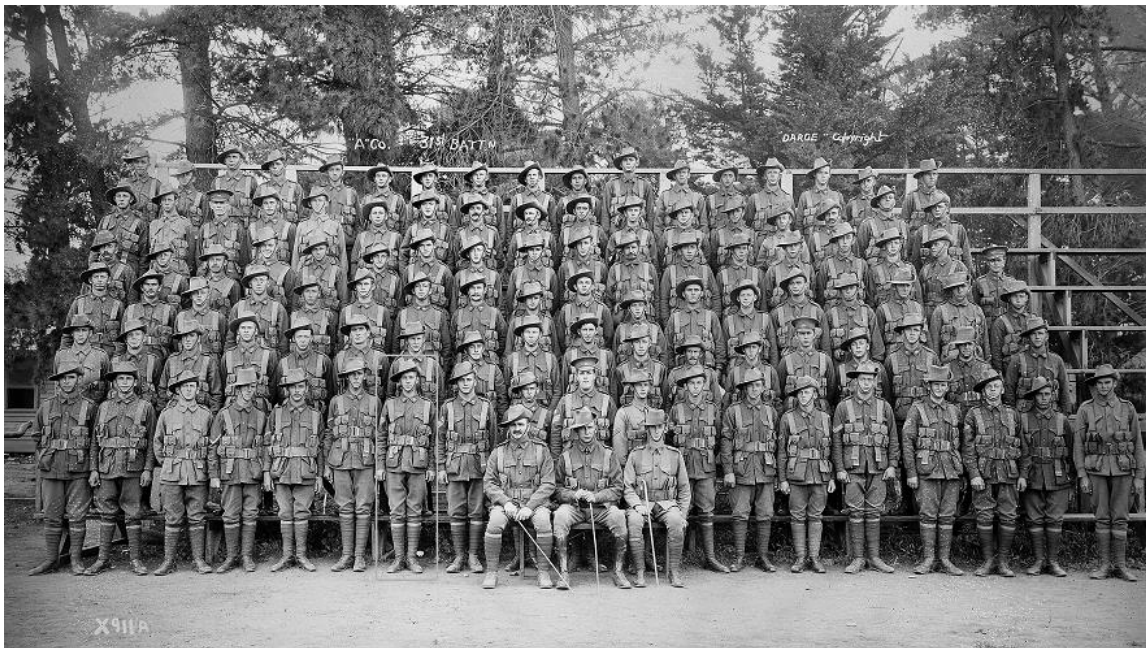
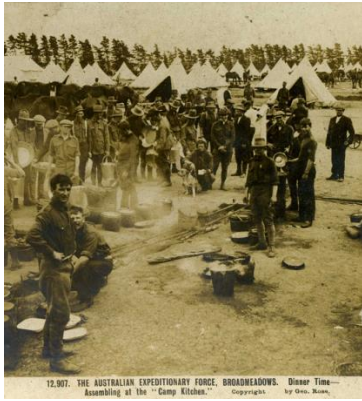
Pte. Mackenzie A.	to be Corporal, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Moorhouse F.W.	to be Corporal, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Lane T.	to be Corporal, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Compton J.O'C.	to be Corporal, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Springfield E.	to be Corporal, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion
a/Corpl. Fraser A.K.	to be Corporal, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Adams T.C.	to be Corporal, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Boldery W.R.	to be Corporal, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. O'Connor J.E.	to be A/Corporal, "A" Coy, 31st Battalion
Sergt. Dening M.E.	to be C.S. Major, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Corpl. Sparkes P.G.	to be C.Q.M.S., "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
a/Corpl. Brodie J.	to be Sergeant, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Corpl. McLean W.	to be Sergeant, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
a/Corpl. Holland E.	to be Sergeant, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Corpl. Thompson R.	to be Sergeant, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
a/Corpl. Wilson G.H.	to be Sergeant, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
a/Corpl. McKay E.J.	to be Sergeant, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
a/Corpl. Dryden C.D.F.	to be Sergeant, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
a/Corpl. Batteram R.	to be Sergeant, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Barlow E.T.	to be Corporal, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Bridgland G.D.	to be Corporal, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Kendall H.M.	to be Corporal, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Wilkinson T.F.	to be Corporal, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Davidson M.S.	to be Corporal, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Barnsley T.	to be Corporal, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Whelan N.J.	to be Corporal, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Wilthew H.W.	to be Corporal, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Bishop A.R.	to be Corporal, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Synnott B.P.	to be Corporal, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Graham W.J.	to be Lance Corporal, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Morris L.G.	to be Lance Corporal, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Furlonger J.	to be Lance Corporal, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion
Pte. Tinsley J.	to be Lance Corporal, "B" Coy, 31st Battalion

Many of these men were to later either be commissioned or otherwise featured prominently in the battalion's history throughout the war years.

A farewell concert was held on the 2nd October, provided by the Battalion Band and the Queensland Governor sent his best wishes for the Officers and men of the Battalion.

On 3rd October 1915 the Queensland contingent of the 31st Battalion entrained from Enoggera, transferred to the NSW train at Wallangarra, again transferring to the Victorian train at Albury, before arriving at the Broadmeadows Camp on 5th October 1915.

Upon arrival the Queenslanders were united with the Victorian contingent who formed 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 31st Battalion. The same daily routines were followed and throughout October, musketry exercises were conducted at the North Williamstown Rifle Range. On the Friday following Melbourne Cup day the 29th and 31st Battalions along with the 8th Field Ambulance paraded through Melbourne streets along a route of Collins St, Spring St, Lonsdale St, Exhibition St, Bourke St, Elizabeth St, to the Royal Park Camp for lunch, prior to marching back to Broadmeadows Camp via Sydney Rd.



'A' Company, 31st Battalion at Broadmeadows, October 1915



Sgt F.R. Smith ('The Queenslander and front row, 7th from left)

Upon embarkation for overseas service, the Battalion Graduated list of Officers is as follows :-

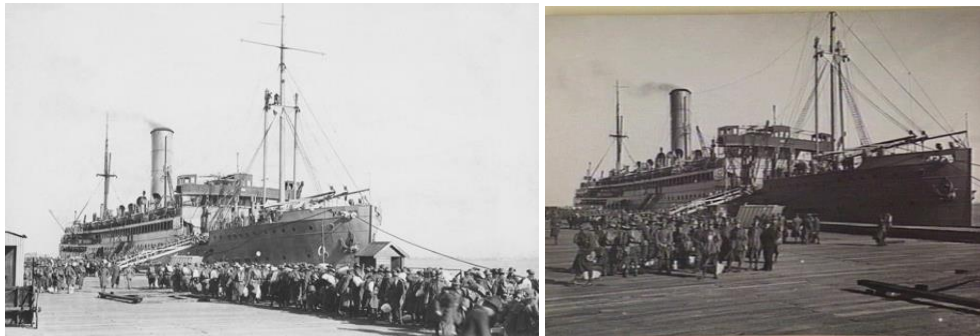
Lt. Col. F.W. Toll, V.D.
 Major Eckersley
 Major R.R. Hockley
 Major C.E. Clements

Commanding Officer
 Senior Major
 "A" Coy.
 "C" Coy.

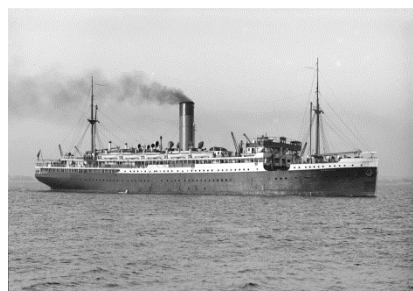
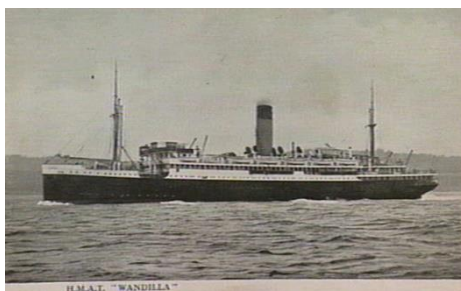
Capt. R.P. Blundell	"B" Coy.
Capt. A. McAllister	"B" Coy.
Capt. C. Mills	"C" Coy.
Capt. L.J. Kimber	Adjutant
Lieut. E.S. Walker	Transport
Lieut. J.H. Crombie	Machine Gun
Lieut. G.G. Robertson	Signallers
Lieut. F.R. Corney	"C" Coy.
Lieut. W. Sharp	"D" Coy.
Lieut. S.K. Fisher	"A" Coy.
Lieut. W. Macpherson	"C" Coy.
Lieut. E. Murphy	"B" Coy.
Lieut. A.E. Halstead	"B" Coy.
2/Lieut. V.D. Bernard	"A" Coy.
2/Lieut. R.C. Aland	"A" Coy.
2/Lieut. D.P. Walker	"C" Coy.
2/Lieut. F.Drayton	"C" Coy.
2/Lieut. R.K. Hibbs	"D" Coy.
2/Lieut. H. Goldsmith	"C" Coy.
2/Lieut. A.D. Ellis	"D" Coy.
2/Lieut. H.E. McLennan	"A" Coy.
2/Lieut. G.A. Still	1/31st.
2/Lieut. P.C. Eckersley	"A" Coy.
2/Lieut. E.W. Spreadborough	"B" Coy.
2/Lieut. V.L. Morrissett	"B" Coy.
2/Lieut. J.R.S. McLeod	"D" Coy.
2/Lieut. B.C. Lewis	"D" Coy.
Hon. Lieut. T.F.C. Faine	Quartermaster

On Monday 8th November 1915 the Transport section, 31st Bn , Lieut E.S. Walker with all drivers (i.e. Company Drivers, Machine Gun section drivers, HQ Staff drivers, i.e. 36 men) together with Lieut W. Sharp and a Sergeant and eleven men from 'D' Coy, embarked on H.M. Troopship 'Bakara' at Port Melbourne.

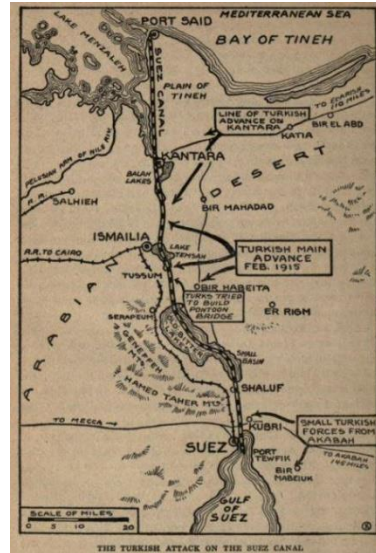
The following day (9th November 1915), Frank was among the 30 Officers and 961 Other Ranks and the 1st Rfts consisting of 1 Officer and 100 Other Ranks of the 31st Battalion who had embarked and sailed on H.M.T. (A62) 'Wandilla'.



31st Bn embarking on HMAT 'Wandilla' (AWM H18777)



Both ships disembarked at Suez on 7th December 1915, whilst the Gallipoli evacuation was being prepared, and entrained to the camp at Zeitoun. Later in the month the battalion again entrained for the Canal Defense Zone at Serapeum and on 19th December, 'A' Coy, along with Frank, were posted to the Gebel Habeitf Mountain Range (8 miles east of Serapeum) for Canal Defense until relieved on 4th January 1916. The Battalion remained at Serapeum throughout January and into February, providing Canal guarding duties.



On 20th February Lt G.G. Robertson was promoted Captain and 2/Lts V.D. Bernard and R.C. Aland were promoted Lieutenants. I suspect the structure of the 'A' Coy Platoons was now I Platoon, Lt P.C. Eckersley, II Platoon, Lt V.D. Bernard, III Platoon, Lt R.C. Aland, with Sgt F.R. Smith and IV Platoon, Lt H.E. McLennan.

Battalion entrained from Serapeum on 24th February, after delays and lack of co-operation by the Railway Department, into filthy dirty horse trucks just recently evacuated, to arrive at very dirty camp at Tel el Kebir. Many fatigue parties to get the camp into a clean and satisfactory state.

March of 1916 was the time of the major reorganization of the AIF. "A" Company inoculated 1st dose for typhoid and paratyphoid (off duty 48 hours) on 13th March, receiving their 2nd dose on 21st March. Quite a few officers transferred to other battalions and the 31st had men transferred to 5th Pioneer Battalion, Major R.R. Hockley transferred to 2nd Pioneer Bn (replaced by Capt G.G. Robertson, as OC 'A' Coy). Cpts J.H. Crombie and E.S. Walker, Lieuts H. Goldsmith and B.C. Lewis along with 100 men transferred to the 5th Division Artillery. On the 22nd March, the battalion was inspected by H.R.H. The Prince of Wales along with Generals Birdwood and Murray and put on notice to be ready to move at short notice. On 28th March the Battalion moved by road to Ferry Post and set up camp on the Duntroon Plateau with 'A' and 'B' Coys taking up a 6500 yard frontage on the outpost line until relieved by other battalion companies on 8th April.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

G01470

Trenches at Ferry Post (Duntroon Plateau) in defence of Suez Canal.

The battalion received 145 replacement men on 1st April. Then on 14th April the battalion, relieved by 53rd Bn, moved back to the Ferry Post Camp with the rest of the 8th Brigade and continued with routine training (i.e. bayonet fighting) and completing equipment requirements. On 27th May the 8th Brigade moved to Moascar (4 miles W of Ferry Post).

The Battalion entrained at Moascar and travelled all night to the wharf at Alexandria, arriving 16th June, where they embarked on HMAT 'Hororata' for convoy to Marseilles escorted by a light cruiser.



After arrival at Marseilles on 25th June 1915, they entrained for Steenbecque Railway Station, thence to billets in Morbecque (near Hazebrouck).



On the 7th July, Sgt Francis Ryan Smith reported back to 'A' Coy, from 'Sniping School' and Lieut Vivian Dalziel Bernard was promoted to Captain. Frank had obviously displayed shown his aggressive nature in taking the offensive to the enemy and an ability of marksmanship. Also on this day the battalion received standby orders to move to the front line. Then on 11th July they relieved the 15th Battalion in the Bois Grenier Line sector before being relieved by the 4th NZ Battalion on the 16th July and billeting in Fleurbaix, when Operations orders were issued.

Much has been written about the hastily planned and poorly conceived up-coming battle at Fromelles and the Germans knew of the planned assault. At 6 pm on the 19th July 1916 the assault began. Lt Col Toll had decided that in the order of battle the Queenslanders of 'A' Coy and the Victorians of 'C' Coy would be in the first two waves in the attack – so Frank was in the vanguard. The 31st Battalion took and secured the first line of German trenches but after that with the confusion of objectives and the failure of the assault in general the battle became grim. 'A' Coy had lost their OC, Capt Gregor Robertson and a great many men were casualties from the pre bombardment and the attack. Lt Col Toll who had come across on the next waves now gathered the remnants and advanced a further 200 yards where Major PAM Eckersley was instructed to consolidate this position whilst the CO, Lt Bernard, Lt Still and two others reconnoitered the forward area. Frank would have been in this group with Lt RC Aland and Sgt F Law. Although they held out throughout the night, with the German counter attacks in the early morning, lack of ammunition and reinforcements and the general collapse of the attack, what was left of the battalion were forced to retire to their own lines under fire on the morning of the 20th July. The following is Lt Col Toll's report:-

"Fleurbaix"

Report on Operation "Assault on and attempt to Consolidate Enemy's trenches N10c13 to N10c14 on the 19th and 29th July 1916".

Observation and Artillery fire will be found in summary of Intelligence attached forthwith. Commencing at 2.45 pm first message was sent to Brigade Head Quarters CA/1 "Enemy straffing from midday searching for batteries. Enemy trench mortars on front line from N.10.c.06 to N10.c.56 some falling on parapet and majority on 75 yards line. From 2 pm enemy heavy straffed support and communication trenches behind sector referred to above. Many casualties. Our trench mortars not yet firing. Many of our shells falling short. Our heavy artillery has apparently destroyed some of the enemy trench mortars. Enemy's parapet and wire between N10.c.33 and N10.c.64 being destroyed in many places".

At 3.15 pm CA/2 "Very heavy straffing on both front and support trenches N10.c.06 to N10.c.67. Flares and ammunition blown up in front dump. Telephone station carried away by shell. Four signallers and two runners injured. Colonel received several pellets in face and legs but not out of action. Observers report heavy damage to wire and parapets by our shells. No man's land also being cut up. Heavy bombardment now continuous on both sides. Enemy firing rifle grenades in section between "mine" and "cellar farm" avenues, coming enfilade from left flank".

At 3.59 pm message received BMI 1 "Report when in position" to which at 4.01 pm the reply was given CA/4 "Four waves now in position 4 pm".

At 4.10pm CA over 5 "Our artillery on effect on sector N10.c.03 to N10.c.33. Our shells landing in rear of enemy's parapets". A further progress report at 4.50 pm CA over 6. "At 4.30 pm our shells still falling in rear of enemy's parapets between N10.c.03 and N10.c.33. Their wires still intact in this sector. At 4.38 pm wire in sector N10.c.43 to N10.c.75 badly damaged, also parapets. Enemy shelling lightly on front line but very heavy on support trenches".

Reports were the received that our shells were dropping on our own parapets causing casualties and at 4.56pm the request was made for our artillery to lift Section "A". This was not carried out by artillery but became worse, shells falling the whole frontage held by us, very heavy casualties eventuating and at 5.10 pm a very urgent wire was sent CA over 7 "Please ask Artillery A5A to lift another 100 yards on sectors 'A', 'B' & 'C'. Shells falling behind our parapet 5 pm". The situation was not improved and at 5.19 pm CA over 8 was sent "Our artillery dropping shells behind Sectors 'A', 'B' & 'C' 4.50 to 5.15 pm. Artillery asked to LIFT over these sections. Enemy wire N10.c.03 to N10.c.33 not much damaged. On left N10.c.33 to N10.c.641/2 wire and parapets badly damaged, very little enemy fire on front trenches practically all on supports between "Mine" and "Cellar farm" avenues, and NORTH of same searching for batteries. Casualties occurring through our own shrapnel. At 5.45 pm CA over 10 "Being severely enfiladed from left flank. Enemy wire still intact in Sector N10.c.03 to N10.c.33 but parapet damaged. Most of our shells land 20 to 30 yards in rear of their parapet. They are now shelling our front line with scattered casualties". It will be seen that our casualties during the afternoon prior to attack were heavy and unfortunately very many must be accounted to our own artillery dropping short. Just prior to launching the attack the enemy bombardment was hellish, and it seemed as if they knew accurately the time set.

At 5.58 pm CA over 9 "first and second waves across parapet and deployed in No Man's land, ready to launch attack, C.O. leaving with 4th wave."

In the face of terrific shell fire now on the Battalion bravely lead by its Officers, sprung over the parapets and charged across No Man's Land. Unfortunately many Officers were struck down in this early stage together with senior NCOs, and in many instances were without leaders. Our wire had been well cut and there was no difficulty getting through. No Man's Land was fairly easy to cross although badly cut up by large craters and ditches full of water etc. The enemy's wire entanglements were found to be badly broken. No man's land was swept mostly by enemy machine gun fire. The enemy's first line was won and thoroughly cleared, many Germans were killed and prisoners taken. The dugouts were thoroughly searched by bombs. A temporary search was made for the communication trenches but could not be found except in one instance. Only sufficient men were left behind to assist the Lewis Machine Gunners in establishing posts. The remainder swept on with the intention of capturing the second and third trenches in the first line system, but we went on and on but no trace could be found of the same. It now appeared evident that the information supplied as to enemy defences and aerial photographs were incorrect and misleading. The ground was flat and covered with fairly long grass, the trenches shown on aerial photos were nothing but ditches full of water, along which were straight lines of trees. We pushed on expecting to eventually reach the enemy's works. At 6.30 pm a wire CA over 12 was sent by pigeon "Four waves well over 200 yards beyond enemy's parapets, no enemy works found yet so am digging in!"

The men were rallied and opened out and instructed to dig in about 250 yards from the enemy's front line. The CO and Staff went on through our own box barrage and investigated some 350 to 400 yards about N10.A.78 and found immediately in front, about 150 yards, N10.A.75 to N10.A.91/2.4 what appeared to be a strong and important enemy position. It was protected in front by high heavy barbed wire entanglements some five feet high and would have been a difficult position to storm and was intact from our own gun fire. All this time our men were feeling the effect of the enemy's enfilade artillery and machine gun fire, the latter coming from concealed positions, farms, Delangre and from houses in "Les Clochers" village.

Also from our own Artillery as it was impossible to post them as to our position. The men were reorganised and disposed as well as possible and an attempt made to co-ordinate their trenches with the 54th Battalion on our right. No contact with the 32nd Battalion on our left then being made. We had to use our entrenching tools to dig temporary cover exposed to shell and machine gun fire from all points of the compass and sand bags were very few in number, with which to build parapets. The men were cheerful and worked willingly and it is impossible to differentiate. There was a woeful scarcity of Officers and NCOs but the best was done under the circumstances. The Advance line was under the command of Major Eckersley and in the event of them not being able to hold during the night, the CO decided to strengthen as much as possible the enemy's first line with what material was available and made his Headquarters there. Communication being kept up with advance party.

At 7.14 pm CA/13 was sent by pigeon. "No works to hold so fell back to enemy first line. Send ammunition across urgently. Machine Guns and crews required. Am strengthening parapets. Will require entrenching tools picks and shovels, sandbags. Many casualties but cannot estimate until first count after reorganising".

Contact was made with the 54th Battalion on our right flank, but none could be made with the 32nd on our left, who apparently had pushed the whole of their men beyond the first line and had entrenched nearly in line with our own battalion, but contact was afterwards established. Very few of our men were available for the improvement of defence of the enemy's first line and all men available 54th & 55th Battalions and Engineers were put on to strengthen parades by transferring bags from rear to front and throwing up dirt, using entrenching tools and few shovels in hand. Picks, shovels and sandbags were in urgent demand but where thousands were required hundred only available. Naturally to converge and strengthen this position took some considerable time. Promises of assistance were given to advance line but could not be fulfilled. The enemy's first trench had been thoroughly cleared of Germans and part of one underground communication trench was located. It was a heart breaking job attempting to block the various openings in the trenches with the material at hand and the men performed miracles cheerfully. All the time we were under shell and machine gun fire and suffered heavy casualties. At 7.25 pm CA over 14 message was sent "can hold enemy's first line if reinforcements are sent over urgently. Send men with picks and shovels, extra ammunition for machine guns and men".

Small parties from Infantry and sappers volunteered to go over to our own lines to bring over ammunition, shovels and sandbags, and were successful in doing so, but the amount brought over was inadequate. At 8.50 pm CA over 15 was sent. "Have been to front as far as 350 yards in rear of enemy's first trenches but there are no trenches or works of any kind to consolidate merely open ditches full of water." Part of the Battalion are attempting to entrench but owing to heavy casualties from shell fire on front left flank and rear (our own) position is untenable 8.30 pm.

"Small isolated parties are digging on our right front apparently straightening out line. Material will be required and communication opened up with our original trenches. We have suffered severe losses and may require assistance to hold position. Urgently require stretcher bearers, medical assistance as all bearers are casualties."

At 8.55 CA over 15 "Thick curtain of smoke in front and cannot observe (this smoke, was afterwards ascertained, came from our ammunition dumps which were on fire) strengthening parados of first captured enemy's lines. Battalion broken up reorganisation at present impossible. Send as many stretchers and bearers as possible. Ammunition required, also picks, shovels, sandbags and duckboards."

Message BMI 24 in response to appeals was received, "Reinforcements tools ammunition and machine guns now going forward."

Our advance line was informed on this and requested to hold on and keep digging in and obtain touch with the joining units. Next BMI 49 received about 10 pm? "Report urgent which portions of attack successful, which are doubtful and which portions of enemy's trenches still held by enemy so that a fresh bombardment can be arranged in order to gain the whole line. Give exact boundaries for artillery guidance. The portions captured will be held onto."

At 10.20 pm CA over 17 the following reply was sent "Have captured enemy's first line opposite Brigade sector but doubtful as to exact location, enemy are sniping with M.G.s and cannot locate, village on fire and cannot observe forward defences badly knocked about. Consider our troops 200 yards in front at least though in no formed earthworks. Must have support early and no large reconnaissance can be made. Machine and Lewis guns holding on although being severely shelled and are short of ammunition send urgent". At 10.25 pm CA over 18 "Uncertain as to exact area captured have not seen 32nd. 54th on my right (Colonel Cass) sending this "Have no communications except telephone to Colonel Cass. Advance line were driven back from their position but entrenched about 199 yards in front of enemy's first line. Some were under Captain Mills. Lieut. Morisset, Aland and McLeod were present with men from their respective companies, probably some 200 men. The balance of our Battalion were scattered and mixed up with other units. Messages were sent to and fro to our advanced line and Officers and men urged to hold out and assistance was promised as soon as it was forthcoming. A small party of the 29th Battalion not more than 2 platoons reinforced, in charge of Sergeant O'Sullivan who reported and placed himself and party under the C.O. They were a welcome and useful addition to our small garrison and assisted to hold our left flank which was very tenuated, but was held by C.S.M. McLean of 'B' Company with a small body of 1 Sergeant and 6 other ranks until Lieut. Wilson and party joined up later. Warrant Officer McLean endeavoured to obtain touch with troops on our left flank but there was a huge gap of hundred yards and it was apparent that the division on our left had either not launched an attack or had been unsuccessful. This flank was a source of anxiety the whole night and it was evident that if attacked from this direction our position would be extremely difficult to hold. Reports were continually sent in with requests for ammunition shovels picks sandbags and at 11.45 pm the following message was sent CA over 19 "Only small party of 29th Battalion arrived under a Sergeant. Must have relief for first line also communication required. Reinforcing troops should bring across telephone wire to link up. Large quantities of sandbags required for front line. Being heavily bombarded by enemy's guns on left flank".

It is worthy of mention that Private D. O'Connor of 'B' Company willingly volunteered and took over three separate messages across no man's land, which was continually swept by Artillery and Machine Gun fire.

The Artillery on both sides was extremely severe and our works were torn by sides, the advance line particularly feeling the effect of our own artillery who of course did not know our position. Our machine gun fire from our own lines in rear was also very gruelling especially as we had had to shift sand bags from one side to the other to obtain protection from enemy fire, and so expose ourselves in the rear. Owing to the lack of sandbags saps and large openings in enemy's lines could not be properly blocked, and these were a constant source of anxiety as through these the enemy would probably counterattack. All ranks worked exceedingly hard and if our left flank had been secure the captured trenches could have been held.

Sufficient ammunition had been brought across to keep two Lewis Guns and 1 Machine Gun going but the ammunition had to be nursed. The gunners did magnificent work and are specially mentioned. Lieut. Trounson and 1 man of the 31st and two from the 54th worked the Lewis Guns, but the crew of the machine gun is unknown. Lieut. Drayton assisted Captain Robertson of the 54th to organise the grenadiers, but the supply of bombs was inadequate and soon exhausted. No grenadiers were available for the left flank. At 2.30 am an Officer reported that the advanced right flank had been driven back by bombers to the enemy's first line, but held there until the general retirement. From this onwards all hands stood to, and strengthening work had to be held over as it was evident that the enemy intended to counterattack in force. About 3.30 am the left flank was also driven in and from reports and information sent in they formed part of the 32nd Battalion. These did not hold in the enemy's front line but retired right across no man's land to our own original positions. Our orders were to hold captured positions and we determined to hold on. By means of MG and Lewis Guns and with rifle fire we held off the enemy but were under a gruelling enfilade fire from Artillery and Machine Guns. At last at 5.30 am the enemy attacked from both flanks simultaneously and in force preceded by strong bombing parties. Our supply of grenades was exhausted so resisted by rifle and machine gun fire only. The enemy moved outside and under protection of parados so were secure from our artillery. The retirement of both flanks had left us up in the air and

it was apparent that we would have to retire. At 5.45 am the remnants of our troops broke and retired and it was impossible to restrain them although an attempt was made to keep them at the point of the revolver. The C.O. was the last man to leave the enemy's trench.

The enemy then swarmed in and the retirement across no man's land resembled a shambles, the enemy artillery and machine guns doing deadly damage. Our own lines were reached at last, but the artillery was intense and even under the shelter of own trenches the casualties were awful. At 7.00 am a message CA over 20 was sent. "Held advanced line until daylight when flanks broke. Were then attacked by bombers and heavy artillery which practically blew us out. The flanks breaking caused a general retirement at 5.45 am to our original front line. With small remnant of my battalion apparently only three Company Officers remaining in front line and will await further orders".

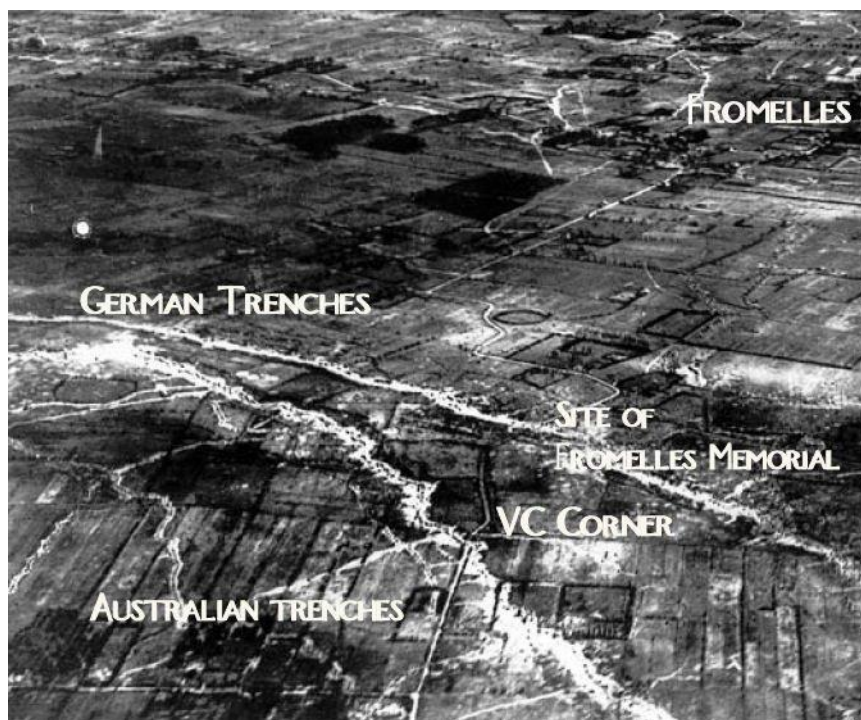
Our lines were in a dreadful condition, wounded men everywhere, most of whom had lain there all night. All stretcher bearers were casualties and under the intense bombardment heavy casualties were occurring.

At 8.12 am CA over 21 was sent "Unless we have heavy artillery retaliation immediately and silence the enemy's guns practically the whole of the Brigade will be wiped out. Hundreds of stretcher bearers are required".

The condition of the wounded were so awful and assistance so urgently required that the C.O. proceeded to Brigade Headquarters where the necessary arrangements were made to collect wounded. The remainder of the Battalion were then marched out of front line and billeted in Fleurbaix.

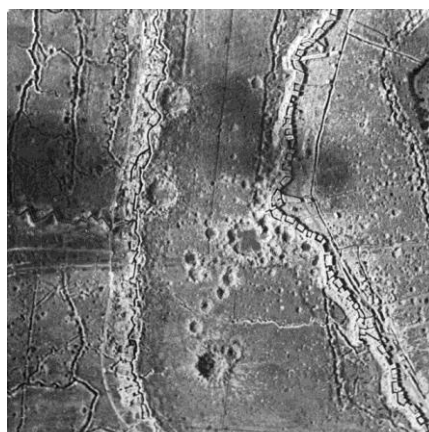
To sum up, under the hellish concentrated enemy fire, the battalion did magnificent work in capturing and holding the positions for so long without reinforcements and necessary material to consolidate captured works and it was only the breaking of both flanks that it was finally forced to retire to its original attacking position.

Fred. W. Toll Lt. Col.
C/O 31st Battalion





AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

31st front line parados at Fleurbaix

Battle field crossed by 31st Bn



Fromelles Battlefield

(German perspective)



Angriff b. Fromelles 19.7.16

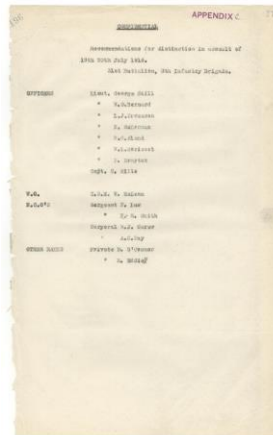


Angriff b. Fromelles 19

Aftermath of German trenches held by 31st Bn throughout the night of 19th/20th July 1916

Lt Col Toll who had been one of the last to retire, was now tasked with regrouping the battalion and forwarding his reports. The Battalion moved and billeted in Bac St Maur. Initial casualty reports showed 152 officers and men killed or missing with 421 wounded, though after some reinforcements on the 23rd, the battalion strength was 11 Officers and 501 other ranks on the 25th July 1916.

In his recommendation reports, Lt Col Toll stated that he wished to draw attention to the many “who are killed or wounded whose deeds may never come to light”, and in recommendations for rewards, he nominated some Officers, NCOs and men though stating “the superhuman efforts made by all ranks it makes it extremely hard to differentiate.” Sgt F.R. Smith was among the confidential list of those recommended for distinction, and although all others received a reward, Frank for some reason missed out.



CONFIDENTIAL

Recommendations for distinction in assault of 19th, 20th July 1916.
31st Battalion, 8th Infantry Brigade.

OFFICERS	Lieut. George Still Lieut V.D. Bernard Lieut. R. McLennan Lieut. R.C. Aland Lieut. V.L. Morisset Lieut. F. Drayton Capt. C. Mills
WO	CSM W. McLean
NCOs	Sergeant F. Law Sergeant F.R. Smith * Corporal R.J. Carew Corporal A.C. Day
OTHER RANKS	Private D. O'Connor Private R. Eddie

On the 30th July the reorganization of the battalion structure was announced as follows and it shows that Frank was now promoted in charge of III Platoon, 'A' Company and he received a promotion to 2/Lieut.

The following temporary transfers will take place from today. The first named officers of companies will administer the affairs of companies to which they are attached pending confirmation of promotions. The WOs and NCOs will command platoons as shown:

Headquarters:

CO: Lieutenant Colonel Frederick William Toll

Assistant Adjutant: CSM Robert Wingate

QM: Lieutenant Percy Godfrey Sparkes

Lewis Gun Officer: Lieutenant Laurence John Trounson

Intelligence Officer: Lieutenant George Alfred Still (in hospital) attached to "B" Company

RMO: Captain Francis Lyth Nance

RSM: 246 Sergeant Frances Law

“A” Company:

Lieutenant Robert Clegg Aland to command

Lieutenant Percy Charles Eckersley No.1 Platoon

348 RSM John Grey Brodie No.2 Platoon Sgt Osbourne Fergus Allan, #126, II Platoon, ‘A’ Coy

Sergeant Francis Ryan Smith No.3 Platoon

173 CQMS Valentine Casey No.4 Platoon

“B” Company:

Lieutenant Harold Eric McLennan to command

Lieutenant George Herbert Wilson No.5 Platoon

Lieutenant Thomas Alfred Davies No.6 Platoon

349 WO William McLean No.7 Platoon

“C” Company:

Captain William Walter Tracy to command

Lieutenant Douglas Pinckney Walker second-in-command

Sergeant John Scot Gamble No.9 Platoon

797 Sergeant Stanley Towns No.10 Platoon

800 Sergeant Edward Joy No.11 Platoon

Sergeant Harold Daniel Skinner No.12 Platoon

“D” Company:

Lieutenant Frederick Drayton to command

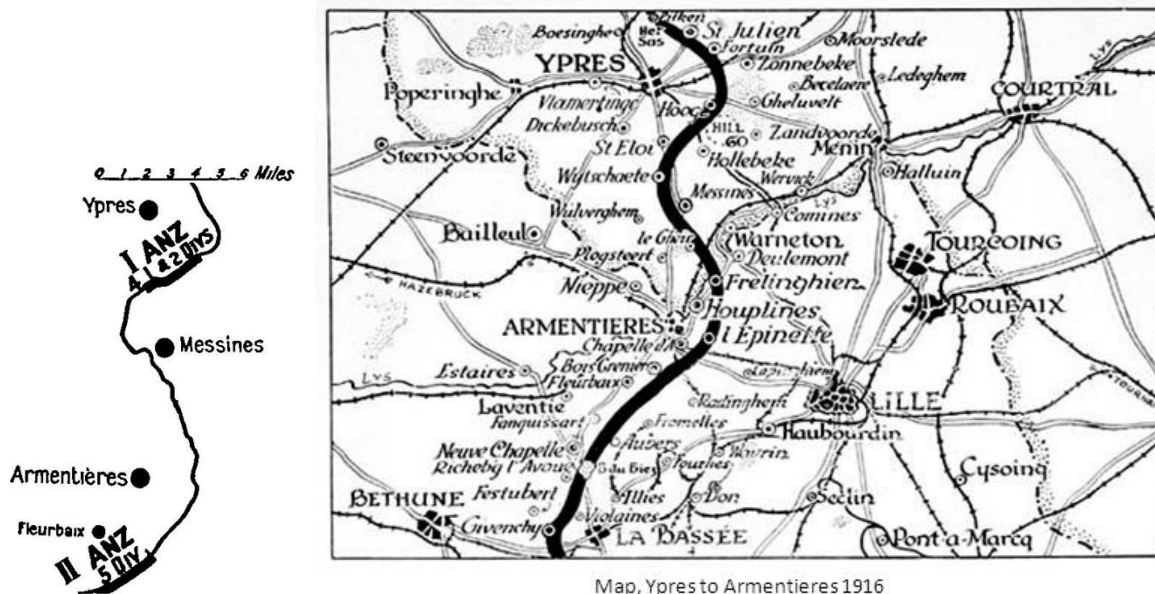
Lieutenant Cecil James Blomfield No.13 Platoon

791 CQMS Alfred Willis Garland No.14 Platoon

801 Sergeant Harold Robert Newall No.15 Platoon

Captain Tracy to be acting second-in-command.

The 31st Bn was ordered back into the trenches on 31st Jul/1st August, relieving the 29th Bn and remained there until again relieved by the 29th Bn on 15th August 1916, and moving into billets at Rue Biache. Whilst in the trenches at Fleurbaix, patrols were sent out into no man’s land and one party was assigned to chlorinate dead bodies. The GOC expressed his gratification of good work done by “A” and “B” Companies in clearing up no man’s land of rifles, equipment and the covering of bodies. On 28th August, the new subaltern Frank Smith was placed in charge of the Baggage Guard and the battalion moved to La Motte, for a period of training in gas protection, wood fighting and bayonet fighting. Again the battalion moved back to Fleurbaix on the 7th September 1916 until a further move to Armentieres and the Houplines sector taking over from the 4th Seaforth Highlanders on 22nd September.



Map, Ypres to Armentieres 1916

This was in response to the requirement of removing the 51st (Highland) Division from the front, forward of Armentieres, for deployment elsewhere. The Australian 5th Division to the south and the British 34th Division to the north would each supply a Brigade each to fill this vacancy. Thus the front line was held by a two Brigades for each Divisional responsibility. The Australian 8th Brigade and the British 103rd Brigade comprised this composite force under the command of Major General George Franks, such that this ad hoc Division became known as 'Franks Force'.

(Major General George Franks was born in Edinburgh, Scotland 16th Oct 1868 and educated at Marlborough College in Wiltshire, he was commissioned in the Royal Artillery in 1887. From 1894 to 1898 he served on the North West Frontier of Pakistan on the Waziristan and the Tochi Valley expeditions keeping the uneasy peace with the Afghan Emirate. In 1898-1899 Captain Franks went to North Africa on the Nile Expedition with Lord Kitchener to reconquer the Sudan after it was lost to Britain following the fall of Khatoum and the unsuccessful Gordon Relief Expedition in 1885. He was Mentioned in Despatches for his role at Omdurman when his horse was killed. As a Lieutenant Colonel he was a Professor at the Quetta Staff College in India from 1909 to 1912. From August 1914 Franks served with the British Expeditionary Force in France commanding No1 Heavy Artillery Reserve Group and then as General Officer Commanding the Royal Artillery in the 2nd Army. He developed the principles for counter battery work which would remain the British doctrine for artillery for the rest of the war. General Franks became Major-General Sir George McKenzie Franks the following year and masterminded the artillery for Plumer's 2nd Army at Messines. From July 1917 he commanded British 35th Infantry Division.)

The front line in the Houplines sector presented some marked contrasts to the one the 8th Brigade had just left. Although the trenches were nominally continuous, they were held rather as a series of strong posts with unoccupied stretches between them. The defensive works were in need of considerable repair and the brigade's field engineers and the pioneers were soon hard at work on them.



180. A VIEW OF THE OPPOSING LINES NEAR HOUPLINES, ARMENTIÈRES

“The Chicken Run”

The British trench maps were important tools for planning and conducting operations but they were not always available or quick to use. Various features of the terrain were named using easily understood terms that quickly came into common use. Many features such as *Four Hallots Farm* were already identified as such although some licence was taken in the way the soldiers pronounced it.

Some simple names were adopted such as the *White House* and *La Maison Verte*, houses painted white and green respectively. Not that much of the colours remained for long. *Westminster Bridge* was planking over a brook running through the trench. *Southend Pier* was more planking for entering the trench near the brigade headquarters. The ***Chicken Run*** was a row of outhouses in the German lines about 40-50 metres away.

These names were important and used when desiring to stipulate any portion of the trench, whether speaking between individual soldiers or in communication with the artillery. For instance, a large number of men might be seen working in the trench by the ***Chicken Run*** as could be seen by planks moving above the level of the trench, or from water being bailed out. A message would be sent back asking the artillery to shell just in front of the ***Chicken Run***.

Exactly how these place names came about is not well recorded and there are probably many surrounding the ***Chicken Run***. One story is probably as good as another. A likely one is that when the British laid their trench line there was in fact a farm that lay deserted, its lawful owners having found the situation too hot for them. Cows roamed about at random, and so did pigs. But after the British soldiers had dug themselves in and made their position secure, the chickens were what interested them most. There were at least two hundred and fifty of these and they used to parade on the strip of ground shown in the picture below, the bolder spirits peeping over the edge of the trench.



'The Chicken Farm' by Harold Harvey. *A Soldier's Sketches Under Fire*

Catching them was good sport, but eating them was something finer. What a nice change from bully beef and biscuit. So many fowls were caught, killed and plucked for cooking and eating that the wet mud was completely covered with feathers and resembled a feather bank, the feathers sticking to the wet mud on the men's uniforms and equipment turning them into wild men. The enemy did fairly well also with the poultry farm in the distance. They appeared to have a portable kitchen, the British soldiers often watching the funnel moving about their trench. One day a line was stretched from the funnel to a pole and German officers' uniforms were hung out on the line to dry over the stove. It made too good a target and shooting at officers' uniforms was a pleasant diversion. They had been well pierced with bullets before they were taken in.

So with the need to convince the Germans of a larger force holding the line rather than the two Brigade fronts, a routine of bombardments (artillery and with Stokes mortars), gas barrages and a series of raids on the German trenches (i.e. 29th Aug – 57th Bn raided the 'Sugarloaf' Salient, 28th Aug – a bombardment to mimic the Battle of Fromelles plan, 15th Sep – 56th Bn (14th Bde) raided trenches near Le Bridoux, 16th Sep – 30th Bn (8th Bde) raided trenches at 'The Tadpole', 18th Sep – 58th Bn (15th Bde) raided trenches east of 'Sugarloaf', 20th Sep – 56th Bn again raided German line, 25th Sep – 16th Bn (4th Div) raided the Germans at Oosthoek, 26th Sep – 15th Bn (4th Div) attempted a 'silent raid' on No 5 Crater south of Ypres-Comines Canal, 13th Bn (4th Div) entered German lines near "Piccadilly Farm", 29th Sep – 18th Bn (2nd Div) attempted a raid at "Sanctuary Wood", on 30th Sep – 16 raids were undertaken on the 2nd Army front, 6th Oct – a platoon sized raid by the 29th Bn (temporarily attached to Franks Force) attempted to raid the 'Chicken Run'. Then on 12th Oct the Divisions of the 2nd Army undertook 16 raids of which 14 entered the German lines.) in order to harass the Germans.

Meanwhile on 1st Oct 1916, 2/Lt Frank Smith volunteered to organise a raid for the 31st Bn and took a fighting platoon to the Saily Bombing School for a training scheme for a "Chicken Run" raid.

At the Army Headquarters level a decision had been made that the Australians would be returning to the Somme, this time including the 5th Division. The 8th Brigade would be pulling out of the Houplines Sector the following day to be replaced by the New Zealand Division. To keep the illusion that the Armentieres front line was still fully committed, the 5th Division Commander ordered a total of 12 raids to be carried out on the evening of 12th Oct, along its entire front. The artillery pummelled the German trenches from dawn. When the guns fell silent the mortars continued. The action was repeated in the afternoon as 5 officers 100 men of a raiding party from the 31st battalion moved into the front line trenches. Frank Smith had increased the size and scope of the raiding party and intended to remain in the German trenches for 40 minutes instead of the usual 10 minutes. At 7:30 pm the 31st Battalion raiding party climbed over the parapet in the darkness and moved forward to attack the *Chicken Run* again. With careful planning and good leadership the raiders were able to cross No Man's Land quickly under cover of the brigade's mortars. After thirteen minutes they dropped down into the *Chicken Run*, and stayed in the German line for forty minutes, entirely clearing the sector. Dugouts were bombed, first with smoke-bombs and then with mortars. A large number of Germans were killed and 4 prisoners

of the 9th Bavarian Infantry Regiment were brought back as well as 2 machine guns, rifles and a quantity of German equipment.

The raiding party of the 31st Bn was under the auspices of Capt R.C. Aland, with 2/Lt F.R. Smith leading and assisted by 2/Lieut J G Brodie, 2/Lieut R. Thomson and 2/Lieut P. C. Eckersley and 100 other ranks of 'A' Coy. Frank was wounded whilst on the jumping off line by a shell from the German counter barrage or a 'Minenwerfer' though he still participated as by his own words in a letter to his brother George:- ***"I got hit when leading a night raid on Fritz's first line. I volunteered; got the job. Took three officers and 105 men over. We were lying out in the open waiting for the signal to go. I passed the 'Get ready' down the line, and then Whish! Bang! Wallop! Oh – I'm hit! Looked at my watch and seeing that it was time to charge I hopped up and yelled and swore, and everybody else yelled and swore to the best of their ability to the tune of 'Big Lizas' and 'Whiz Bang' and machine guns! In we went. We killed 100, took 10 prisoners, blew up the dug-out, made four fires, went mad generally, and after 45 minutes we came back tired but quite pleased, having accomplished our object. When we got back again I began to feel the smack in the foot, and in taking off my boot I found that my sock was covered with blood, and my foot had a nice little hole in it. Got put in an ambulance waggon and sent over here. Will be back with battalion in three weeks' time I think. Remember me to inquiring friends."***

The raid was considered a success with the Divisional Commander very pleased (and awarded medals at special parade of raiders on 15th Oct). Though the raiders suffered 3 men killed, 1 missing and another 28 men wounded. From battalion records have been able to discover the outcomes of these men though others of 'A' Coy were also on the raid.

Capt Robert C Aland, (OC 'A' Coy)
2/Lieut Frank R Smith, WIA, awarded MC
2/Lieut J G Brodie, awarded Mention by Div Commander
2/Lieut R Thomson, awarded Mention by Div Commander
2/Lieut Percy Charles Eckersley

Cpl Bertie Drinkwater, #2916, awarded MM
Pte Keith Renouf #289, awarded MM
Pte Alexander Gordon, #2133, awarded MM
Pte Daniel Allen, #2870, awarded MM

from Battalion Order No 244, Part II (pg 067)

KIA

Sgt W W Erickson, #195	'A' Coy
Pte W A Higgs, #2032	I Platoon, 'A' Coy
Cpl N H Saunders, #294	'A' Coy

WIA

2/Lieut F R Smith	'A' Coy
Pte G Adolphus, #1521	'A' Coy
Pte T J Allen, #2268	'A' Coy
Pte W A Bain, #2876	'A' Coy
Pte H Boughton, #2277	'A' Coy
Pte A J Copp, #2885A	'A' Coy
Pte T S Currie, #2994A	'A' Coy
Pte F J Caton, #2886A	'A' Coy
Pte W J Clibborn, #2889A	'A' Coy
Pte E J Copper, #2503	'A' Coy
Pte D B Davis, #3016A	'A' Coy
Pte C Drumgool, #2894A	'A' Coy
Pte L J Eggins, #2309	'A' Coy
Pte H Falle, #2320	'A' Coy
Pte H Farley, #2322	'A' Coy
Cpl W J Graham, #206	'A' Coy
Pte P J Hawkins, #219	'A' Coy

Pte A R P Jackson, #231	'A' Coy
Pte G H Bell, #2272	'A' Coy
Pte F W J Jessop, #2353	'A' Coy
Pte T Logan, #2966	'A' Coy
Pte R J Russell, #3016	'A' Coy
Pte E B Sowden, #3038	'A' Coy
Cpl W C Townsend, #1519	'A' Coy
Sgt A E Williams, #313	'A' Coy
Pte F S Warrener, #781A	'A' Coy
Pte T A Wiggins, #2464	'A' Coy
Pte C A Wilson, #2465	'A' Coy
Pte J Wright, # 2995A	'A' Coy

MIA

Pte Clarence Benjamin Pullen, #2937A 'A' Coy Prisoner of War

"At about 8 pm on 12/10/16, I was part of a raiding party organized from the Company, to obtain prisoners and general information. While in the German trenches, I was rendered unconscious, how, I do not know. When I regained consciousness, I found that I was a prisoner."

Others: Pte P J Curran, #2300 'A' Coy Sgt W Kennard, #2972 'A' Coy
Sgt Osbourne Fergus Allan, #126 (II Platoon) 'A' Coy

Upon returning from the raid wounded, Frank was admitted to the 8th Field Ambulance for a shrapnel wound to the left foot. He was then transferred through the 2nd Casualty Clearing Station to the 14th General Hospital, Wimereux. He was then embarked on the Hospital Ship 'Jan Breydel' at Boulogne on 14th October 1916 for evacuation to England. Admitted to the 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth, on 15th October, where he finally had the shrapnel removed from his foot on the 23rd October 1916. After a medical board examinations Frank was transferred to the 6th Auxiliary Hospital, Southampton, on 11th November and the on 14th November he was discharged to furlough and to report to the AIF Depot at Perham Downs.

After a submission by 'Franks Force' in connection with the raid carried out by the 8th Infantry Brigade on 12th Oct 1916, Frank was awarded the Military Cross: ***"2nd Lieut Smith, though wounded before the assault, led his party into the German trenches and directed the work of his men with conspicuous coolness and gallantry. His fine example to the men under his command helped materially on the success of the raid."***



On 26th November his promotion as Lieutenant was posted, and he reported in at Perham Downs on 4th December 1916. After Christmas 1916, Frank proceeded overseas to France via Southampton on 26th December and marched in to the 5th AIDBD at Etaples on 27th December 1916. On 4th January 1917, in very wintery conditions Frank now marched out to rejoin the 31st Battalion in the vicinity of Dernancourt on 7th January.

Frank had another close shave with death, when writing home to his father on the 26th January 1917 he says:—
"Before you have time to make any comments on my handwriting I must state that the weather-board states 10 degrees Fahrenheit. After writing a few lines I am compelled to warm my hands over a small fire just near me."

Every morning I have to heat my boots over a fire before I can put them on. If you use your towel at night the moisture freezes and by morning it resembles starched linen. Six pairs of socks won't keep your feet warm except when you're walking. I am at present acting as A.D.C. to our Divisional Commander. His A.D.C. is away on leave and he sent to our battalion for a suitable officer to take his place. The Colonel sent me. Nothing much to do. Simply walk around with the General on his morning tour, and fix up his papers. Arrange them etc. In spite of this, it is – cold. I have been a full Lieutenant since November 22nd, 1916. This does not mean that I am "tight every day"; but that I now wear two stars on each shoulder instead of one. Don't expect any more promotion until after the Spring offensive. Then, providing that six senior officers get either badly wounded or killed, I'll get my Captaincy. Of course, I may stop one myself. However I'm an absolute fatalist. My platoon sergeant and I were sitting under a few bits of tin in a trench, with a waterproof sheet between us last Tuesday. Along came a H.E. shell and killed him, shell-shocked another chap and simply gave me a 'kink' in the neck and a nasty taste in the mouth. After we fixed him up we were sitting in the same place among the debris when another shell lobbed in the exact spot lately occupied by my Sergeant. Yours truly was chucked many yards, and except for being a bit dazed was O.K. One man about ten yards away was badly wounded. If that's not luck I don't know what is. Love to father and good luck for the New Year."

This suggests that Frank returned to his old III Platoon 'A' Coy, as the platoon sergeant mentioned was Sgt James Francis Downing, #191, 'A' Coy, III Platoon, age 31. Labourer/ Grazier who had enlisted at Murgon, Queensland. Son of Robert and Cecilia Downing, of Baramba, Goomeri, Qld. At La Transloy, in Spring Trench, at 7.30 am, on 19th Jan 1917, he was killed by a piece of shell to the head, died on way to Dressing Station. He is buried in the Guards Cemetery, Lesboeuufs.



Frank remained with the battalion through the actions at Baupame in March, though he went on leave to England on 7th June and rejoined the unit on 19th June 1917.

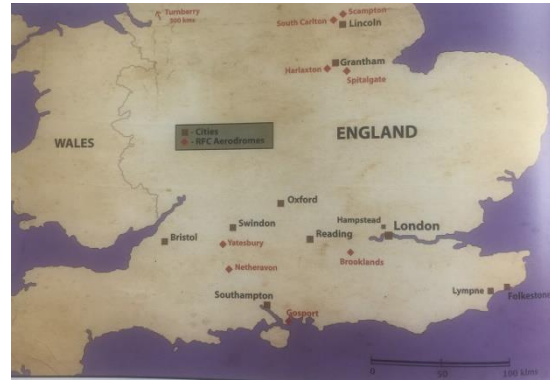
At this time the Australian Flying Corps was looking to expand. Australia had always been to the forefront of aviation with the establishment of the Central Flying School at Point Cook and the deployment of the First Half Flight to Mesopotamia. In 1916 after the success of No 67 Sqn RFC (No 1 Sqn AFC) and with the encouragement of Senator Pearce and Billy Hughes the British authorities gave approval for the establishment of operational squadrons supported by appropriate training squadrons. Although initially attached to the RFC, they would become the Australian Flying Corps –the only colonial force to provide an air arm in WW1. So Nos 68, 69 and 71 Sqns RFC (later from Jan 1918 No2, No3 and No 4 Sqns of AFC), untrained, unequipped and incompletely formed, arrived in England in the winter of 1916-17.

Of the Australian squadrons, No. 3, under the command of Major Blake, landed in England on the 28th December, 1916; No. 2, under the command of Major Watt, on the 30th January, 1917; No. 4, under Captain A. Lang, on the 27th March, 1917. All three squadrons were strengthened by the attachment from No. 1 Squadron of experienced flying officers and aerodrome personnel. No. 3 Squadron was sent for training to South Carlton, Lincolnshire (23rd Training Wing, R.F.C.), No. 2 to Harlaxton, Grantham, Lincolnshire (24th Training Wing, R.F.C.), and No. 4 to Castle Bromwich, near Birmingham (25th Training Wing, R.F.C.). The training lasted in each case for about eight months, and was carried out so as to familiarise pilots and mechanics with every possible type of aeroplane which they might have to use in France. The time had arrived when pilots and observers were really taught the new science, and were not, as in the earlier days, sent abroad to pick it up as best they could over the battle-lines. Besides the technique of the aeroplane, they were called upon to learn intimately the construction of machine-guns and Lewis guns, shooting from the air, navigation by compass. observation of country and the tricks of distinguishing ground objects from the new angle, the practice of photography from the air, and the artillery-officer's work of battery-ranging and 'spotting' for fire-effect. In

addition, pilots and observers received from experienced pilots regular lectures upon local conditions on the Western Front, and upon the latest tactics in the science of air fighting.

As Frank had indicated in his letter to his father, of a wait of six officers going before he would get a Captaincy, and with the challenge and excitement of this new way of fighting, it seems likely he applied during his leave to England, for a chance with the AFC. He was one of 300 Australian applicants who had volunteered for 13 vacancies in the Aerial Corps and was successful.

On 25th Aug 1917, he proceeded to England, via Boulogne, on duty and was placed on the seconded list for training with the AFC, in England, on 29th Aug 1917. Reported to No 3 Training Sqn, AFC School at Reading, England, on 1st September, for commencement of the anticipated 8 week training course as a pilot.



At some stage during his training, Frank, being the no nonsense decorated officer obviously took offence to something such that his record shows that on 27th Oct 1917; he (1) Neglected to obey in such a manner as to show wilful defiance of authority of an order given in the execution of his duty. (2) Insolence to an NCO by giving a false name. No further action was taken, and despite the risks with flying training he was successful in graduating and was appointed Flying Officer (Pilot) with the AFC, on 23rd Dec 1917 and allocated to No 2 Sqn, a fighting scout squadron.



On 27th February 1918 he proceeded to France via Folkestone and was taken on strength of No 2 Sqn AFC ex home establishment on 28th February. Here he would have been under the guidance of more experienced, 'old hands' pilots of the squadron of the likes of Major Roy Phillips, Capt AT Cole, Capt Roby Manuel, Capt Eric Cummings, Capt Les Holden, and others whilst undertaking offensive patrols. The following photograph of the Officers of No 2 Sqn taken on 25th March 1918 (Frank -2nd from right front row, with Lt Alexander Clark and Capt Les Holden, kitted ready for an offensive patrol)



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

E01883

Back row: Second Lieutenant (2nd Lt) Thomas Hosking (killed in action 26 March 1918); Captain (Capt) Eric Douglas Cummings DFC; Lieutenant (Lt) Frank William Follett; 2nd Lt Oscar Thomas Flight; Capt Gregory Hammond Blaxland; Lt George Raymond Brettingham-Moore; Lt Hubert Edward Hamilton; 2nd Lt Archie Royce Rackett.

Middle row: Lt Alpin Charles Hamilton; Lt W Q Adams; Lt Lawrence Benjamin; Capt Robert William McKenzie MC; Lt Frederick Walter Sexton; Lt Claude Fay Felstead; Lt Leslie John Primrose (killed in action 4 June 1918); Lt Louis Francis Loder; Capt Roby Lewis Manuel DFC and Bar.

Front row: Lt Alexander Goodlet Clark; Capt Leslie Hubert Holden MC AFC; Capt Henry Garnet Forrest DFC; Major William Sheldon (Commanding Officer); Capt (later Major) Roy Cecil Phillipps MC and Bar DFC; Capt Francis Ryan Smith DFC, MC; Lt Lewis Septimus Truscott.



At this period No 2 Sqn AFC was experimenting as a Wing and flying staggered formations with No 43 RAF and No 80 RAF Squadrons, both equipped with Sopwith Camels. No 2 Sqn would supply topcover at 16,000 feet while the Camels would fly at 14,000 and 12,000 feet respectively. For the pilots of No 2 Sqn flying for long periods in the thin and oxygen depleted air is strain at the best of times, and the large Wing formations

were scaring off enemy aircraft so the SE5a pilots had nothing to relieve the boredom. Major Murray Jones wrote, *"the enemy's aircraft, unless surprised generally dived east, thus avoiding combat."*

Piloting a SE5a (C9496), he destroyed a German Pfalz III fighter when he got behind it and fired into the aircraft until destroyed and crashed at Marcoing on 9th May 1918. This was followed with another Pfalz III aircraft sent out of control at Clery on the 2nd June 1918.

Frank now had a period of leave from 12th to 27th June 1918.

Nos 2 and 4 Sqns, along with British No 46 (Camels) and No 103 (DH9's) formed No 80 Wing at Reclinghem on upper Lys, southwest of Therouane on 1st July 1918.

Conducted a 20 min test flight in his SE5a (D6190) in afternoon of 2nd Jul 1918

Back with the squadron, he achieved another victory, this time over a Fokker DVII whilst flying SE5a (D6190) at Capinghem on 4th July 1918 (the Fokker DVII was at that time the most capable and feared German fighter plane in the air and all but one of his following victories would be over the Fokker DVII).

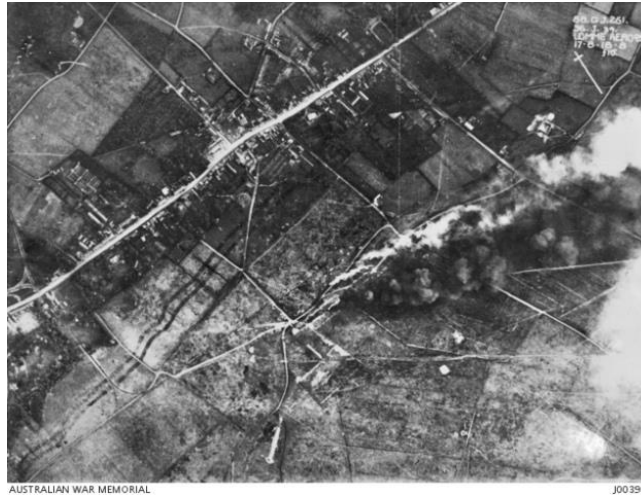
On the 8th July 1918 he was WIA for the 2nd occasion, he crashed his SE5a (D6190) while testing it and was unconscious for 15 minutes. Admitted to the 54th Casualty Clearing Station with slight concussion, he was discharged back to duty with No 2 Sqn on the 13th July 1918.

With a new machine (C6403) Frank sent another German DVII out of control over Wavin on 7th August 1918.



Then on 16th August 1918 *"A raid was carried out on Haubourdin Aerodrome (home of Jasta 63), by Nos 88 and 92 Squadrons and 2nd and 4th Squadrons A.F.C. Sixty-five machines in all took part, dropping 136 25-lb and 6 40-lb bombs and firing a large number of rounds from a height varying from 400 to 50 feet. Three large hangars containing machines were completely burnt, and two machines standing outside were set on fire. Several fires were started in huts, and what is believed to be the officers' mess was blown up and burnt. Several other hangars, in addition to those burnt, received direct hits. The station at Haubourdin was also attacked with machine gun fire from low height, causing confusion among the troops. Two staff cars were fired at, one of which upset in a ditch and another ran up a steep bank; the occupants were not observed to leave. A train was also shot at, which stopped. Considerable casualties were caused among personnel at the Aerodrome who were seen rushing take refuge in a hospital. All machines returned."*

Again the following day, 17th August 1918, the same squadrons carried out a similar raid on Lomme Aerodrome. The raid succeeded in dropping 104 25lb and 2 40lb bombs on the site.



“Many direct hits were observed on sheds, hangars and huts. From photographs taken during the raid, two sheds can be seen burning fiercely, and from the strength of the wind it, is probable that others also caught fire, but the sheds to the leeward were obscured by smoke. Several other fires can be seen among the huts and workshops. A large number of rounds were also fired and casualties inflicted on the personnel on the aerodrome, and on a party of mounted troops who made for Lille at full gallop. Two hostile machines dived down to Haubourdin aerodrome on the approach of our machines and crashed without a shot having been fired at them. “

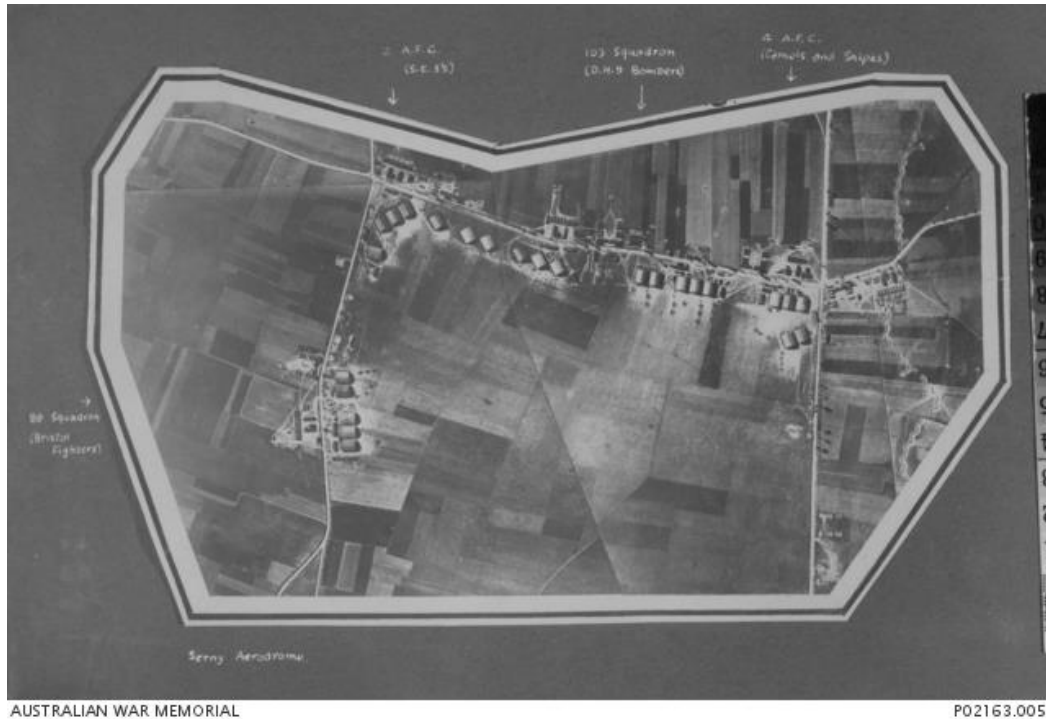
Then on 3rd September and 6th September he destroyed another two Fokker DVII's NW of Cambrai and NE of Douai. He was now considered an 'Ace', from the French word 'l'as' for ace, or 'top of the pack'.

By mid-September 1918 he was a Flight leader and his squadron's leading ace.

Frank sent another two Fokker DVII's out of control over Lille on 16th September 1918. Two flights consisting of eleven SE5as led by Smith, now a flight commander, and Capt Roby Manuel fell upon a formation of fifteen Fokker biplanes and triplanes. Smith led his flight to the east of the formation and attacked the enemy aircraft from above and behind, while Manuel led his formation in from the south. Smith singled out the lead Fokker and dived towards it but the German pilot zoomed up and eluded Smith by doing a half roll. Smith zoomed and then found a Fokker below him in a disadvantageous position. Smith fired 60 rounds into the Fokker and it fell Out Of Control. Smith zeroed in upon another Fokker in the ensuing mellee and sent it down with a short ranged burst from his Vickers and Lewis machine guns.

He led an offensive patrol on 28th September over Armentieres-E of Lille-Seclin-La Bassee though no enemy aircraft observed.

On 1st Oct No 80 Wing, including Frank and No 2 Sqn, moved from Reclinghem to Serny



Serny Aerodrome

The hangars were used by the following squadrons of No. 80 Wing RAF: No. 88 Squadron RAF (middle left), No. 2 Squadron Australian Flying Corps (AFC) (top left), No. 103 Squadron RAF (top middle) and No. 4 Squadron AFC (top right)

In a morning offensive patrol of 11 aircraft, between Lille and Armenteries with no enemy aircraft seen and again in the afternoon – in an offensive patrol of 5 aircraft with no enemy aircraft seen.

A satisfactory test flight was conducted on his trusty SE5a (C6403) on 4th October 1917, followed with an offensive patrol over Harboudin-Lille where 5 Fokkers were observed but too distant to engage. The again on 5th October, on an offensive patrol over Lille-Fleurbaix, 4 Fokkers were observed too distant to engage. Then on a morning patrol on the 6th October, no enemy aircraft sighted.

On 7th October 1918, No 80 Wing RAF carried out a massive raid on roads and railway stations on the perimeter of Lille.

“While patrols from No. 4 Australian Squadron ravaged the communications on the west and north of Lille, No. 2 Australian Squadron and No 103 British Squadron (D.H.9’s), protected above by No. 88 Squadron (Bristol Fighters), bore the utmost possible load of bombs for an attack on the entraining centres on the eastern side. That area was divided for the attack into three sections, each bounded by main railway lines. Cummings’s flight of No 2 Squadron was to range the section between the Roubaix and Tournai railways, F. R. Smith’s flight that between the Tournai and Orchies lines, and Manuel’s flight that between the lines to Orchies and Douai. The Australian formation crossed the lines at 7000 feet in a tornado of anti-aircraft fire, and over Lille descended to 2,000 feet. Cole, leading, then fired a white light, and on this signal each flight turned off towards its allotted area. The arranged task of No. 2 Squadron was to search those areas for road-transport, while the D.H.9’s bombed the big railway stations at Fives and Annappes. Just before the opening of the operations a German two-seater appeared out of the haze before the full array of the bombing fleet and flew for the ground in panic; without a shot fired at it, this German machine hit the earth nose first near Ennetieres and was wrecked.

The S.E.5’s spread out under flight-commanders’ Leadership to range the country towards Tournai, but found on the roads there none of the expected traffic. The only activity to be seen was at Annappes and Fives, where a number of trains were being loaded with troops and stores. Fives was especially busy, and a long troop-train

was steaming into the station. Accordingly the Australian raiders joined the D.H.9.s in attacking these centres. The flights under Cummings and Manuel made for Annappes, and Smith's flight for Fives. At Fives the D.H.9's dropped twenty bombs of a hundredweight each, and in their wake each machine of Smith's formation swept along the lines of trains with a shower of smaller bombs. Each pilot, having released his explosives, turned and again flew the length of the station, spraying the trains and buildings with machine-gun fire. The airmen flew in this attack so low that in several cases pilots' machines were damaged by fragments of their own bombs.

The losses of the enemy both at Fives and Annappes must have been considerable, for many bombs fell fairly among massed transport and on crowded railway carriages and buildings where troops from the trains fled for shelter.

Then on 9th October he sent an Albatros C out of control and destroyed a Fokker DVII, now with 12 victories, whilst on a morning offensive patrol Lille-Armenteries then no enemy aircraft sighted on the afternoon patrol over Lille-Seclin-Don-Pont a Vendin.



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SE5a's of AFC in France



2AFC SE5a

A morning offensive patrol over Tourcoing-Nechin-Fretin-Secli Pont a Vedin, saw Frank dispatch one Fokker DVII in flames and crashed another DVII (W of Roubaix and N of Mouvaux) His afternoon patrol returned early after 35 minutes aloft due to poor weather with thick clouds at 200 feet.

SQUADRON RECORD BOOK.						
Type and Number	Pilot and Observer	Day	Hour of Start	Hours	Time in Air	Remarks
06405	Lieut. F.R. Smith		0900	1145	2.45	
06919	Lieut. G.C. Stone	Offensive	0900	1040	1.40	Carburator trouble
06462	Lieut. L.P. Foster		0900	1145	2.45	Patrol area: SECLIN, TOURCOING, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN.
06707	Lieut. J.L. Long	Patrol	0900	1145	2.45	Weather good. Visibility fair.
06968	/Lieut. F.V. Marshall		0900	1145	2.45	9 500 bombs dropped from base on village of SECLIN at 1005 when fired on by 12 Fokker Biplanes from SECLIN. 8 Fokker Biplanes seen @ 10000' over SECLIN at 1100. 1 in flames by Lieut. Smith 1 crashed by Lieut. Smith 1 crashed by Lieut. Stone 200 rounds fired in aerial combat.
F 800	Lieut. E.L. Kirk	Patrol	1130	1135	.05	Satisfactory
F 849	Capt. H. L.immel	Fireline	1000	1100	.50	See machine from report.

Continued on next page.

The following day whilst on patrol over Tournay-Seclin-Tourcoing, Frank crashed a Fokker DVII and sent another out of control at Havron. He was not to add to his 16 victories though led bombing and ground patrols which caused severe damage to the enemy.

SQUADRON RECORD BOOK.						
Type and Number	Pilot and Observer	Day	Hour of Start	Hours	Time in Air	Remarks
06405	Lieut. F.R. Smith		1000	1100	1.00	
0600	Capt. H.L.immel		1015	1045	.30	returned early - engine trouble
06909	Capt. H.L.immel		1015	---	---	not returned, last seen over SECLIN, at 1000
06908	Lieut. J.L. Long		1000	---	---	not returned, last seen over SECLIN.
06707	Lieut. J.L. Long	Offensive	1000	1100	1.00	Patrol area: SECLIN, TOURCOING, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN, SECLIN.
01110	Lieut. F.V. Marshall	Patrol	1000	1100	1.00	Weather & visibility good.
06404	/Lieut. F.R. Smith		1000	1100	1.00	12 Fokker Biplanes seen @ 10000'
06400	Lieut. G.C. Stone		1000	1100	1.00	1 crashed by Lieut. Smith
06919	Lieut. G.C. Stone		1000	1100	1.00	1 out of control by Lieut. Smith
06968	Lieut. F.V. Marshall		1000	1100	1.00	1 out of control by Lieut. Stone

Continued next page.

Lieut F.R. Smith, MC was promoted Captain on 22nd October, made a Flight Commander of No 2 Squadron and awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.



“For clever enterprising leadership when in charge of offensive patrols of No 2 Squadron, AFC. This officer combines the commoner qualities of individual enterprise and determination with rare abilities as a patrol leader; for example, on the 14th October 1918, when leading a patrol of 5 machines over SECLIN, he saw a formation of 12 Fokker biplanes above and to the East of his patrol. Relying on the co-operation of another higher formation of British machines, he deliberately manoeuvred his formation into a disadvantageous position in respect to the enemy patrol, in order that the higher British formation might be able to attack the enemy while the latter’s attention was concentrated upon destroying the lower British formation. This stratagem was entirely successful, the Fokkers being caught by the higher formation in the act of diving on

that led by Lieut. SMITH, with the result that the destruction of 2 enemy machines was confirmed, and reports indicate that 2 others, in all probability, crashed. The Fokkers were then reinforced by 8 more enemy machines, and in the ensuing combat Lieut. SMITH accounted for one hostile machine in flames, while his patrol destroyed 2 others. In consequence, therefore, of this Officer's capable leadership, the enemy's superior formation was completely defeated and 7 machines destroyed and put out of action. There were no losses on our side. At 1600 on the same day just W of TOURNAI, Lieut SMITH was leading a patrol of 8 machines, and, seeing a formation of 12 Fokker biplanes, attacked and destroyed one of the enemy himself, drove another down out of control, while 2 more were accounted for by the remainder of his patrol. Lieut SMITH has been flying on active service with No 2 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps since 28.2.18, since then he has done consistently good work. Previous to that date he earned the Military Cross whilst serving with the 31st Battalion, Australian Infantry."

Thus as the newly promoted Captain and DFC recipient, Frank proceeded on leave to Paris on 18th October and rejoined the Squadron on 27th October 1918.

On the 29th October the squadron commenced the low level bombing raids and general harassment of enemy forces.

Capt Frank Smith led an offensive patrol on 8th November where 7 Fokker biplanes were engaged by 5 SE5a's, a railway bridge was blown, and several dumps were observed exploding and on fire with billowing smoke at Croisette Aerodrome.

On 9th November 1918, he became the squadron's final casualty, being shot down in a raid to Enghein Rail Junction. He was senior flight commander, leading 2 AFC numbering 18 machines, (they were part of 80 Wing, numbering 94 machines), attacking Enghein, about 30 miles from Tournai, in Belgium. In attacking a moving train Captain Smith got down to within 50 feet of the train. The Huns turned their machine guns on him; his machine crashed down in a field, and broke its back. His report is as follows:- *"At 1515 on the 9th inst whilst leading the squadron on a low level bombing raid on Enghein Station, I was shot down by machine gun fire from the ground, the bullets piercing both petrol tanks and the instrument board. I crashed the machine about 200 yards north of the railway line and after firing a green light I ran towards a farm house about 100 yards away. I managed to elude several Germans who were chasing me, by doubling round the back of the farm house instead of going down a sunken road, which my pursuers appeared to do. I then concealed myself alongside a haystack after pulling down straw on top of myself. After about half an hour I went into the farm house and was given a cup of hot milk by an old Belgian lady after signing to her and expressing the word "English". After that I went back to the haystack and from there saw some Germans approach the farm house. Half an hour Mr L Drycke (son-in-law of the woman in the farmhouse) came out to me with civilian clothes and whilst he kept watch I effected a complete change. This man Drycke then conducted me whilst still daylight, through the German soldiers who were searching the fields about. He showed the greatest coolness and intimated to me that if I would give him a revolver he would keep the Huns away while I made a run for cover, this being in case my identity was discovered. After roaming for a few hours and consulting several friends of his, Drycke led me to the Convent of the Jesuit Fathers in Rue St Augustin Engheim (Belgian). When approaching the convent, following Drycke when a German soldier asked me the whereabouts of a certain college. I answered without having any idea of the direction "a la gauche" apparently satisfied he went off. About 100 yards from there I was again questioned by another German soldier about the Rue de ___ I tried "a la droit" and with similar success. A couple of minutes later I reached the convent gates and was taken in and welcomed by the Father Superior to whom Drycke had explained my position. I was given food and a dorm. Otherwise well looked after by the priests until 0700 on the 12th, when I passed through German outposts as a Belgian refugee accompanied by Drycke and two Jesuit brothers, one of whom spoke English. I walked to 'Ath' and was assisted by Officers of 166th Brigade, 55th Division, 3rd Army Corps, eventually reaching my squadron at Pont au Marcq at 2015, 12th inst.*

Whilst in Belgium I collected a certain amount of information re our late raids, German lines of defence between Engheim and Hal, state of enemy morale and transport etc. the defence information being confirmed GSO 3, 55th Division, who was in possession of captured maps and documents. I was able to

collect this information by wandering around during Sunday and Monday both day and night and by asking the Jesuit Fathers who were anxious to assist.

I delivered all this to GOC, 3rd Army Corps, 5th Army and he advised me to use his name in forwarding a request that Drycke receive some recognition for the assistance he gave me at the risk of his life. I was also well treated by the Burgomaster at Enghiem and his wife who have done splendid work in looking after English prisoners in Enghiem. Letters from some of these prisoners are in the hands of the Burgomaster and his wife."

The image shows four pages of Squadron Record Books, arranged in a 2x2 grid. Each page is a form with columns for 'Type and Number', 'File and Character', 'Date', 'Hour', 'Time of Day', and 'Remarks'. The pages contain handwritten entries in ink, detailing military operations and personnel movements. The top of each page includes the text 'SQUADRON RECORD BOOK' and '27th November 1918'. The handwriting is somewhat faded and difficult to read in many places, but the structure of the records is clear.



Result of air attack on Enghiem

Copy of the Report sent to the C.O. 2nd Aust. Flying Corp. A 27.
 by Capt. F. R. Smith, M.C. P.F.C. 2nd Aust. Flying Squadron. in
 the three days spent behind the German lines. in 1918.


At 1515 on the 9th inst. whilst leading Squadron from a landing ground on
 Boulogne Station I was overtaken by machine gun fire from the ground.
 The bullets passing both behind and over the instrument tower.
 I crashed the machine about 200 yards north of the Railway line, and after
 firing a green light flare towards a farm house about 1000 yards away.
 I managed to elude several German who were chasing me, by
 doubling back around the farmhouse instead of going down a
 sand strewn road which my pursuers all appeared to do. I then
 concealed myself alongside a hay stack after pulling down straw on
 top of my cap after about half an hour I went into the farm house a
 word given a cup of hot milk by an old Belgian woman after
 a moment I was able to get the door unlocked. After that I went back
 to the haystack. I have there seen some Germans approach the
 farmhouse, they came later. W. L. Deycke (P.M.) in the room
 in the farmhouse came out twice with certain clothes & whilst he
 kept watch I effected a complete change. This man Deycke
 then conducted me whilst still day light, through the German
 S. Advers who were searching the fields about. He showed the
 quickest colour & intimated some that if I could give him a
 revolver he would keep the house away while I made a run
 for cover. This being in case my identity was discovered.
 After remaining for a few hours & consulting several persons of
 this village led me to the convent of the Jesuit Sisters in Rue St.
 Augustin (Belgium). When approaching the convent I was
 followed by Deycke until a German soldier called me the subject
 about a certain article. I answered without having any
 idea of the direction. "a la gauche" apparently satisfied he
 went on. About 100 yards further on I was again questioned
 by another soldier about the Rue de - I said "a la droite"
 & with similar success. A couple of minutes later I reached the
 convent gates & was taken in & welcomed by the Father Superior
 to whom Deycke explained my position. I was given food & a room.
 My name will be looked after by the priest until 10.00 on the 12th when
 I passed through German outposts as a Belgian refugee.

accompanied by Deycke and two Jesuit Brothers, one of whom
 spoke English. I walked to Lille, and was assisted by
 Officers of 166th Brigade. 55th Division 3rd Army Corp.
 eventually reaching my Squadron at Pont-a-Marcq at
 20.45. 12th inst.

Whilst in Belgium I collected a certain amount of
 information re the late raids & German lines of defence
 between Belgium & Ital. State of enemy morale &
 transport etc. The defence information being confirmed by
 G.S.O. 3. 55th Division who was in possession of captured
 maps & documents. I was able to collect this information
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I delivered all this to the G.O.C. 3rd Army Corps 5th Army.
 He advised me to use his name in forwarding a
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 assistance he gave me at the cost of his life.
 I was also well treated by the Burgomaster at Ingelmunster
 & his wife who have done splendid work in looking
 after English prisoners in Belgium. Letters from some
 of these persons are in the hands of the Burgomaster &
 his wife.

13.11.18.



OM64-31/5 Francis Ryan Smith Report 13 Nov 1918, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, p.1 & 2

Frank was reported as having failed to return from the operation and upon his return to the squadron four days later he found that he had been posted as missing, and his belongings were being got ready for despatch to his friends with the usual sorrowful message. The message did not go, however.

The Armistice was now in place .

Frank was admitted to 2nd Australian CCS on 16th November suffering with haemorrhoids and was not discharged to the squadron until 29th November. He now took on administrative work on behalf of the CO 2 AFC, though going on leave to England on 29th December 1918 and returning to the Squadron on 8th January 1919.

After the Armistice the squadron personnel were involve I evaluating captured German aircraft whilst being stationed at Hellemes, Belgium until they relinquished their aircraft in late February, marching out to England for RTA on 3rd Mar 1919. They then disembarked on 4th March and marched to No 3 Command Depot at Fovant. Frank was here with No 2 AFC throughout April until embarking on the "Kaiser-i-Hind" with was returning most of the Australian Flying Corps members to Australia. Disembarking first at Fremantle, then Melbourne, the "Kaiser-i-Hind" finally disembarked at Sydney on 19th June 1919, with Frank escorting the Queensland contingent to Brisbane by rail.

Captain Francis Ryan Smith, was the fourth highest Australian Flying Corps ace of the First World War, behind Captain Arthur H. Cobby , Captain E. Roy King and Captain Edgar A.J.K. McCloughry. Other squadron members of 2 AFC who achieved 'ace' status were Roy Cecil Phillipps, Roby Lewis Manuel, Henry Garnet Forrest, Adrian Trevor Cole, Eric Douglas Cummings, Richard Watson Howard, Gregory Hamilton Blaxland, Frank Alberry (*Australia's one legged flying ace*), Ernest Edgar Davies, Robert William McKenzie, Eric London Simpson James Joseph Wellwood, Alexander G. Clark, George J Cox and Les H. Holden (*of Holden Motor Body Builders family company*).