

Wandsworth Cemetery, London

War Graves

(also known as Earlsfield Cemetery, Magdalen Road Cemetery, Wandsworth Earlsfield Cemetery)



Lest We Forget

World War 1



843 TROOPER

J. BETRO

9TH AUSTRALIAN LIGHT HORSE

26TH OCTOBER, 1915 Age 20

Joseph (Joe) BETRO

Joseph Betro was born at Broken Hill, New South Wales in early 1895 to parents John and Zareify Lillie Betro. (Note: Joseph Betro's birth is listed on NSW Births Deaths & Marriages website as Joseph Beatro, birth 1895, parents John & Bridget Beatro, Broken Hill)

Joseph Betro attended the Catholic School at Broken Hill, NSW. He was a member of the Citizen Forces & also a member of the Football, Cricket, Boxing & Running Clubs.

Joseph Betro was a 19 year old, single, Mill Hand (as listed on Embarkation Roll however the Roll of Honour information states he was a Miner) from Beryl Street, North Broken Hill, NSW when he enlisted at Oaklands, South Australia, on 3rd December, 1914 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 843 & his religion was Roman Catholic. His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs Lillie Betro of from Beryl Street, North Broken Hill, NSW. Joseph's brother - Henry Betro enlisted on 16th January, 1915. He was a 19 year old, single, Blacksmith from Beryl Street, North Broken Hill, NSW. His service number was 1706 & his next-of-kin was listed as his mother – Mrs L. Betro of Beryl Street, North Broken Hill, NSW.

Mrs L. Betro signed her consent in a letter dated 25th November, 1914, for her son – Joseph Betro to join the Expeditionary Forces to leave Australia as he was under the age of 21.

Private Joseph Betro & his brother Private Henry Betro both embarked from Adelaide on HMAT *Port Lincoln (A17)* on 1st April, 1915 & then embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Wiltshire (A18)* on 13th April, 1915. Private Joseph Betro embarked with the 4th Reinforcements, 9th Light Horse Regiment. Private Henry Betro embarked with 12th Infantry Battalion, 4th Reinforcements.

Private Joseph Betro proceeded to join M.E.F. (Mediterranean Expeditionary Force) at Gallipoli on 22nd May, 1915. He arrived from Alexandria on 27th May, 1915 & was taken on strength of 9th Light Horse Regiment.

Private Joseph Betro was admitted to Anzac Cove Hospital on 30th May, 1915 suffering from Gonorrhoea & was returned to duty on 3rd June, 1915.

Private Joseph Betro was wounded on 28th August, 1915. He was admitted to 16th Casualty Clearing Station on 28th August, 1915 & embarked from Mudros on 29th August, 1915 for England on Hospital Ship *Devanha*.

According to information provided for the Roll of Honour by Joseph's mother - Joseph's brother - Henry was with Joseph at Gallipoli & spoke to him a few days before he received his wounds.

9th Light Horse Regiment

The 9th Light Horse Regiment was formed in Adelaide and trained in Melbourne between October 1914 and February 1915. Approximately three-quarters of the regiment hailed from South Australia and the other quarter from Victoria. As part of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade, it sailed from Melbourne on 11 February and arrived in Egypt on 14 March 1915.

The light horse were considered unsuitable for the initial operations at Gallipoli, but were subsequently deployed without their horses. The 3rd Light Horse Brigade landed in late May 1915 and was attached to the New Zealand and Australian Division. The 9th was fortunate to be the reserve regiment for the Brigade's disastrous attack on the Nek on 7 August, but subsequently suffered 50 per cent casualties attacking Hill 60 on 27 August. Exhausted and under-strength, the 9th then played a defensive role until it finally left the peninsula on 20 December 1915.

(Information from The Australian War Memorial)

Medical Case Sheet for Private Joseph Betro:

Sept. 12 – *“Wounded Aug. 25 at Dardanelles, No operation. GSW of face. Destruction of right orbit, right nasal bone, part of frontal malar & part of superior maxilla - a small portion of upper lid and none of the lower remaining, A pulsating mass showing in wound”*

Sept 28 – *“ Pulsating mass protruding further forward in orbit, the surface of which is discharging puss. remains of L. lid inflamed.”*

Oct. 12 – *“Patient feels quite comfortable – no pain – has lost his sense of smell....”*

Oct. 15 – *“Metallic fragments round left orbit & nasal side rt orbit.”*

Oct. 19 – *“ ___ spinal fluid has been escaping all day. The mass of brain tissue is much smaller. Patient has had very severe headache especially in the nape of the neck. Patient vomited frequently in the night. Patient feels very weak.”*

Oct. 20 – *“Patient had a fit in the night”*

Oct. 22 – *“Headache not so severe”*

Oct. 26 – *“Patient much worse.Pulse very weak & irregular. Unconscious & irrational. Has a discoloured & blistered patch on lower part of back. Is in H2O Bath.”*

A Lettergram was sent to Mrs Betro on 22nd October, 1915 advising that her son – Private J. Betro was dangerously ill at 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth, London.

Private Joseph Betro died at 7.45 pm on 26th October, 1915 in 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth from wounds received on active service at Gallipoli (gunshot wound to head).

A death for Joseph Betro, aged 20, was registered in December quarter, 1915 in the district of Wandsworth, Greater London.

Trooper Joseph Betro was originally buried in Wandsworth (Earlsfield) Cemetery, London – Grave No. 131, Block 18, Section F. The funeral took place at 2.30 pm on 30th October, 1915 & the deceased was buried at 3 pm.

From the Burial report of Private Joseph Betro – *“the rites of the Roman Catholic Church were observed at the Grave side, the officiating clergy being the Rev. Father T. O’Connor and J. W. Molloy. The High Commissioner was represented by Lieut. Col. H. W. Lee of the Australian Imperial Force. A funeral party was furnished by the Royal Army Medical Corps, and at the conclusion of the Burial Service the “Last Post” was sounded. Floral tributes were sent by the following:- Australian Natives’ Association, 9th Light Horse, Mr Hall, Mrs Wheeler, Sapper Mather, 9th Light Horse, Lady Visitors at Hospital & Nursing Staff and Comrades in Ward C.9”*

A letter from Base Records, dated 17th April, 1920, informing Mrs Betro that the remains of her son – the late Private J. Betro had been exhumed from Grave No. 131 Section F, B. 18 Wandsworth Cemetery & had been reinterred in Grave No. 8, Australian Section, Wandsworth Cemetery, London. Pte Joseph Betro has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Private Joseph Betro requested in his Will, dated 30th March, 1915, that all his property be bequeathed to his mother – Lillie Betro. He also appointed his mother as Executor of his Will.

Private Joseph Betro was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Betro’s mother – Mrs L. Betro (Scroll sent July, 1921 & Plaque sent August, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Trooper Joseph Betro – service number 843, aged 20, of 9th Australian Light Horse. He was the son of John and Lily Betro. Native of Broken Hill, New South Wales.

A War Pension was granted to Zareify Lillie Betro, mother of late Private Joseph Betro in the sum of £26 per annum & amended to £2 per fortnight from 26th October, 1915.

Trooper J. Betro is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 7.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

J. Betro & his brother H. H. Betro are both remembered on the Barrier District Roll of Honour, which is located at the Broken Hill RSL Sub-Branch, 403 Argent Street, Broken Hill, NSW.



Barrier District Roll of Honour

(Photo from War Memorials Register NSW – Mr Patrick Gillespie & Mr Rhys Haskard, Broken Hill City Council)

Joseph Betro is remembered on the National Soldiers Memorial in Adelaide. The Adelaide National War Memorial commemorates those from South Australia that served in the First World War. The names of those that died are listed inside the Memorial, which is located on the corner of North Terrace & Kintore Avenue, Adelaide.



National War Memorial – Adelaide (Photos by Bilby)

(88 pages of Trooper Joseph Betro's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll) & National Archives



[Connected to Joseph Betro:](#)

Private Henry Betro, brother, 1706A, 52nd Battalion. Private Henry Betro was wounded in action in April, 1918 with a bullet wound to right hand. He was medically discharged due to Rheumatism on 15th April, 1919.

He was entitled to 1914/15 Star, British War Medal & Victory Medal.

Private Henry Betro was returned to Australia on 30th January, 1919.



Newspaper Notices

THE LATE TROOPER J. BETRO.

Trooper J. Betro died in the Wandsworth Hospital, London, on October 26 of wounds received during the fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Trooper Betro enlisted in November, 1914, and left for the front in April, 1915. He was 20 years of age last January, and was born at Broken Hill, where his mother now resides. Prior to enlisting he worked at de Bavay's for five years. He was a member of the M.U. I.O.O.F., and the A.M.A. He was also a playing member of the Broken Hill II. Football Club, and was very well known in the city. There are three brothers — two fighting in the Dardanelles and one in camp in South Australia."



Trooper J. Betro
(Died of wounds).

(Adelaide Express & Telegraph, South Australia - 14 December, 1915)

TROOPER J. BETRO

Trooper J. Betro, son of Mrs. L. Betro, of Beryl-street North, died in hospital at Wandsworth, London, on October 26 from wounds. His mother this week received the following letters:—

From Captain John Lang, A.I.F., 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth S.W., October 26:— "Dear Mrs Betro,— I am indeed sorry to be writing this letter confirming my cable message that your son, Trooper Joseph Betro, died this (Tuesday) evening shortly before 8 o'clock at this hospital. I had become very fond of him, as indeed all who were in touch with him were. He was admitted some time ago with a very bad wound in his head, and portion of his brain was protruding through the socket of his left eye. It was almost hopeless to expect him to live, and had he done so I am afraid he would have recovered for a short time only. At the best he would have been a very great invalid. We all hoped that he would have got well sufficiently to have travelled to Australia and ended his days with you at home. It was not so to be, and in spite of the most anxious care and watching he became gradually worse, and passed away peacefully. He suffered at times I am afraid, but everything was done to lessen his pain. The end was painless. The priest of his church attended him before the end. Joe used often to speak of you and of his sister Nellie. I came to

call him Joe, and Sister asked if she might do so. He smiled, and said it would be nice and like home. He sent his love to you and to his sister. This was some days ago, when he thought he would get well. I do not think he realised he was dying until quite near the end perhaps. He was unconscious mostly yesterday and to-day, though yesterday he spoke a little of Broken Hill. Your dear son will have a military funeral, and will be laid to rest in the pretty Wandsworth cemetery, where due not will be taken of his last resting place. Mrs Betro, allow me to extend to you and yours my heartfelt sympathy on losing so good and brave a boy, who gave his life in the service of his country.

Corporal Jack Davies, 4th Reinforcements, 9th Australian Light Horse, writes to Mrs Betro on October 30 from the King George Hospital, London, as follows:—"Dear Mrs Betro,— I have known Joe from the time of our enlisting. We have gone through the same, experiences together, in camp, on board ship, in Egypt, and at the front. A braver or more cheerful chum nobody could have wished for. Though he was only a boy, being a year younger than myself, he stood the strain of trench life far better than many older and fully-grown men. And he has died like a true Australian, for his country's cause and for the loved ones he left behind. When last I saw him he was a stretcher-bearer, and a fine soldier, too. A few days before the charge, when he was hit, I was detailed on duty on the beach, and so saw him no more. However, from fellows who were in the charge I have learnt that he was struck while doing his duty, helping to carry a wounded comrade off the field under fire and in the night. Many brave lads of the 9th Light Horse fell that night. Some of us met again in this hospital, I myself being unwounded, but sick with pleurisy. We heard that Joe had been seriously wounded, and was in hospital at Wandsworth. The poor fellow was unconscious most of the time, and, I fear, could not understand, much less answer, the letters we wrote him. However, it was best, as he could not feel any pain. From my own experience here I can truly say that he would have received every possible attention and everything possible would have been done for him. I know of at least one Australian mother (Mrs. Wheeler) who visited him. He was too ill to have many visitors. The funeral is to be this afternoon, and, though we cannot go ourselves, we chaps of the 9th have sent a wreath. I hope that this letter may help you to bear your load of grief. My mother, too, like you, has given more than one son to the cause of freedom and justice. You have lost a son, and I a comrade; but I trust by God's grace we shall meet again where there is no war, and when we, too, have done our duty."

(*Barrier Miner*, Broken Hill, NSW – 19 December, 1915)

PRIVATE H. BETRO

Private Henry Betro writes from Tel-el-Kebir, on January 18, to his mother, Mrs Betro, of Beryl-street, as follows: "Just a few lines to let you know that I am quite well, and hope that you are the same. I was in Cairo the other day and looked up some of Joe's (brother, who died of wounds) mates. I saw the corporal who came over with them, and he told me that he was in London at the time that Joe died, and he tells me he was well looked after. Some of the boys tell me that Joe took part in a big charge that was made on September 7 or 8. He was stretcher bearing. On the 9th there was another charge, and he was not supposed to have gone out. But he said he could not stand it, and he picked up a stretcher and went to work. They tell me he helped to carry in over 100 men before he got hit. They all stand by Joe. They say that he was one of the bravest among them. He was shot in the head. Well, mum, I do not think he could have met with a braver death. They say that he was doing great work. They had to carry him in once because he had overworked himself. I have not much to tell you otherwise, so I will close, with my best love and wishes."

(*Barrier Miner*, Broken Hill, NSW – 12 March, 1916)

PRIVATE H. BETRO

Private H. Betro, No. 1706 D Company, 13th Training Battalion, A.I.F., writes from Tel-el-Kebir, Egypt, on May 23, 1916, to his mother (Mrs L. Betro, Beryl-street), as follows. —"I am quite in the best of health, and hope that all at home are the same. I am writing these few lines before we move off as the captain tells us that we are going to England. If I do I will go to the Waldsworth Hospital, and find out where Joe's [fatally wounded on Gallipoli] grave is. When we were going to Gallipoli Peninsula, Joe and I met a cousin, the first time we had seen him. We did not see

him after we landed because we did not know what battalion he was in. I met him quite by chance again the other day. He told me that he had been wounded, and that he had a trip back to Australia. He was surprised when he saw me. He thought it was I who had been killed instead of my brother. We are camped pretty near to one another now, and can keep in touch. He has written to his mother saying that he has met me. I have been again transferred this time from the 52nd Battalion to the 13th Training Battalion. I had a letter from Mr. Sweetapple the other day, and he told me some very interesting news. Don't send me any more parcels because I do not get them, and it is a waste of money."

(Barrier Miner, Broken Hill, NSW – 2 July, 1916)

HEROES OF THE GREAT WAR

BETRO – In loving memory of my dear son, Joseph Betro, who was killed on active service October 26, 2+26.

He answered the call, his duty done,

He died a hero, true and brave.

A loving son, a faithful brother,

Peacefully sleeping in distant land he lies,

A soldier, honor his grave.

- Inserted by his loving mother and brothers.

(Chronicle, Adelaide, Sth Australia – 28 October, 1916)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)

Trooper Joseph Betro does not have a personal inscription on his headstone.

Wandsworth (Earlsfield) Cemetery, London

This is to the North-East of Earlsfield Station and is bounded by the Magdalen Road on the East and the main railway line on the West.

It contains five 1914-1918 War Plots, (the general Military Plot, the Australian, the Newfoundland, the New Zealand and the South African plots). These are on the main path leading West from Magdalen Road and there are also over 200 burials in other parts of the cemetery. The Military Plot contains a Screen Wall bearing the names of those buried in it and those in unmarked graves in other parts of the cemetery. The majority of the 1939-1945 burials are scattered throughout the cemetery but there is one group of six burials together in a War Plot near the main entrance. Again, those whose graves are unmarked are also named upon the Screen Wall, Panel 1.

Many of the 1914-1918 burials are from the 3rd London General Hospital which was at Wandsworth. There are 477 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-1918 war and 115 of the 1939-1945 war here. There are also 5 non-war service burials here.

There are 34 Australian World War 1 Soldiers buried here & 1 Australian Soldier from 1925.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

H16917

A group of Soldiers' graves in the Australian Section of Wandsworth Cemetery, London (taken 15 April, 1931)



(Photo by Scotch Mist 2013)



Wandsworth (Earlsfield) Cemetery, London *(Photos from CWGC)*



Photo of Trooper J. Betro's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone at Wandsworth (Earlsfield) Cemetery, London.



(Photo courtesy of julia&keld)