

**Brookwood Military Cemetery,
Brookwood, Surrey**

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



36 PRIVATE

F. D. COMLEY

51ST BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

27TH OCTOBER, 1917 Age 30

Resting

Until He Hears

His Saviour Call

Francis David COMLEY

Francis David Comley was born at St. Peters, South Australia on 16th September, 1886 to parents Charles Albert & Sarah Ann Comley (nee Johnson).

The 1916 & 1917 Australian Electoral Rolls for the division of Fremantle, subdivision of Claremont, Western Australia listed Francis David Comley, Signwriter, c/o Mrs Linton, Grant Street, Cottesloe.

Francis David Comley was a 29 year old, single, Painter (Sign Writer) from St. Peters, South Australia when he enlisted in Adelaide, South Australia on 29th March, 1916 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 36 & his religion was Baptist. His next of kin was listed as his father – Mr Charles Albert Comley, of 5 Lock Street, St. Peters, South Australia.

Private Francis David Comley was posted to "B" Company, 2nd Depot Battalion on 12th April, 1916 for recruit training. He was transferred to 3rd Cyclist Company on 1st May, 1916.

Private Francis David Comley embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Demosthenes (A64)* on 18th May, 1916 with the 3rd Divisional Cyclist Company.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

Private Francis David Comley was taken on strength of Australian Cyclist Training Battalion in England on 29th July, 1916. He was marched in to Australian Cyclist Training Battalion at Chiseldon, England on 31st July, 1916 from Parkhouse, Wiltshire.

Private Francis David Comley was transferred to 12th Battalion. He was marched out from Cyclist Training Battalion on 7th September, 1916 & taken on strength of 12th Battalion on the same day at 3rd Training Battalion, No. 6 Camp, Perham Downs, Wiltshire, England.

Private Francis David Comley proceeded overseas from No. 6 Camp, Perham Downs, Wiltshire on 29th September, 1916. He was marched in to 1st A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France on 1st October, 1916. Private Francis David Comley was transferred to 51st Battalion on 16th October, 1916 & was taken on strength of 51st Battalion in the Field the same day.

51st Battalion

The 51st Battalion was raised in Egypt in the first week of March 1916, as part of the "doubling" of the AIF. Approximately half of its recruits were Gallipoli veterans from the 11th Battalion, and the other half, fresh reinforcements from Australia. Reflecting the composition of the 11th, the 51st was predominantly composed of men from Western Australia. The battalion became part of the 13th Brigade of the newly-formed 4th Australian Division.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private Francis David Comley was wounded in action in France on 2nd April, 1917. He was admitted to 4th Australian Field Ambulance on 2nd April, 1917 with GSW (Gunshot wound/s) to back. Private Comley was transferred to 10th General Hospital at Rouen, France on 7th April, 1917. He was transferred to 2nd Convalescent Depot on 15th April, 1917 then marched in to 4th A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France on 18th April, 1917. Private Comley proceeded to join his Unit on 30th April, 1917 from 4th A.D.B.D. & rejoined his Unit in the Field on 1st May, 1917.

51st Battalion

Early in 1917, the battalion participated in the advance that followed the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line. On 2 April it attacked at Noreuil, a village which had been fortified to delay the Australian advance.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

War Diary – 51st Battalion

1 / 2 April, 1917 :

A. B. & D. Coys moved into position for advance and attached on NOREUIL vide Bn Order No. 18. Copy attached marked I. Report on Operations attached marked II.

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Mr C. A. Comley, of 5 Lock Street, St. Peters, South Australia, was advised on 25th April, 1917 that Private F. D. Comley had been reported wounded. A follow up letter date 9th July, 1917 was sent to advise that Private Comley had been admitted to 1st Southern General Hospital on 14th June, 1916 with gunshot wound to left thigh.

Private Francis David Comley was wounded in action (2nd occasion) on 9th June, 1917. He was admitted to 77th Field Ambulance in Belgium on 9th June, 1917 with GSW (gunshot wound/s) to left thigh. Private Comley was transferred & admitted to 11th Stationary Hospital at Rouen, France on 10th June, 1917. He embarked for England on Hospital Ship *Warilda* at Havre on 15th June, 1917.

51st Battalion

Later in the year, the focus of the AIF's operations moved to the Ypres sector in Belgium. There the battalion fought in the battle of Messines between 7 and 12 June.

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

War Diary – 51st Battalion

Report on operations 6th – 18th June.

Preliminary instructions for the attack on the MESSINES Ridge were received on 30/5/17 and the final orders at 11.00 am on 6th June.

.....

CASUALTIES

The total casualties for the period were

	<i>Offs.</i>	<i>O.R.'s</i>
<i>Killed in action</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Wounded in Action</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>76</i>
<i>Missing</i>		<i>4</i>

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Private Francis David Comley was admitted to 1st Southern General Hospital, Dudley Road, Birmingham, England on 15th June, 1917 with GSW to left thigh. He was discharged to furlo on 3rd July, 1917 & was then to report to No. 1 Command Depot at Perham Downs.

Private Francis David Comley was marched in to No. 1 Command Depot at Perham Downs, Wiltshire on 18th July, 1917 recovering from GSW to left thigh. He was medically classed as B1 A4 (fit for overseas camp when passed dentally fit). Private Comley was passed dentally fit on 23rd July, 1917 & was marched out the same day to Overseas Training Depot.

Private Francis David Comley proceeded overseas to France via Southampton on 8th August, 1917. He was marched in to 4th A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Havre, France on 9th August, 1917. Private Comley proceeded to join his Unit from 4th A.D.B.D. on 24th August, 1917 & rejoined his Unit in the Field on 27th August, 1917.

Private Francis David Comley was wounded in action on 16th October, 1917. He was admitted to 3rd Australian Field Ambulance on 16th October, 1917 with Gas poisoning then transferred to 3rd Canadian Casualty Clearing Station the same day. Private Comley was admitted to 54th General Hospital in France on 17th October, 1917. He embarked for England on 24th October, 1917 on Hospital Ship *Port Elizabeth*.

War Diary – 51st Battalion

15 October, 1917: A & D coys move back to ANZAC Ridge with B & C Coys. Detailed instructions regarding the treatment and prevention of sore feet as this very prevalent owing to the wet & cold experienced up in the line.

16th October 1917: Bn relieved by 49th Bn after relief moving to hutted Camp in CANAL AREA YPRES (Location H. 17.d.6.5). Relief completed at 12 noon.

....

Summary of Casualties period 10 – 16th inclusive

	Offs.	O.R.'s
<i>Killed in action</i>	2	49
<i>Wounded in Action</i>	5	125
<i>Evacuated to Hosp sick</i>	2	56

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Private Francis David Comley was admitted to 1st London General Hospital, Camberwell, England on 25th October, 1917 – seriously ill.

Private Francis David Comley died on 27th October, 1917 at 1st London General Hospital, Camberwell, England from wounds – gas poisoning (Gas poisoning was classed as “Died of wounds”).

A death for Francis D. Comley, aged 31, was registered in the December quarter, 1917 in the district of Lambeth, London, England.

Private Francis David Comley was buried at 1 pm on 1st November, 1917 in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England – Grave number 179965. From the burial report of Private Francis David Comley - *Coffin was good polished Elm and brass mountings. The deceased soldier was accorded a Military Funeral. The coffin was draped with the Australian Flag. Firing Party, Bugler and Pallbearers, under the command of an officer, were supplied by the South African Regiment stationed at Woking. A beautiful wreath from the relatives present at the funeral was placed on the coffin. The grave will be turfed immediately, and an oak cross will be erected by the A.I.F. Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral.*

Names of relatives and friend present at the Funeral – (Cousin) 2/Lieut. H. L. Nelson, 10 Pembridge Gardens, Notting Hill Gate, London. (Uncle) Mr A. E. Comley, 1 & 2 Burges, Coventry, England.

Mr C. A. Comley, of 5 Lock Street, St. Peters, South Australia, was advised in March, 1923 that the site of the grave of Private F. D. Comley in Brookwood Military Cemetery was officially registered as Plot 11, Row c, Grave 20. He has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Private Francis David Comley was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Comley's father – Mr C. A. Comley, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent February, 1922 & Plaque sent October, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Francis David Comley – service number 36, aged 30, of 51st Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of Charles A. and Sarah A. Comley, of 5 Loch Street, St. Peters, South Australia. Native of South Australia.

Private F. D. Comley is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 152.



Roll of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

F. D. Comley is remembered on the All Souls Anglican Church Honour Board, located in the Church at corner of Stephen Terrace & Third Avenue, St. Peters, South Australia.

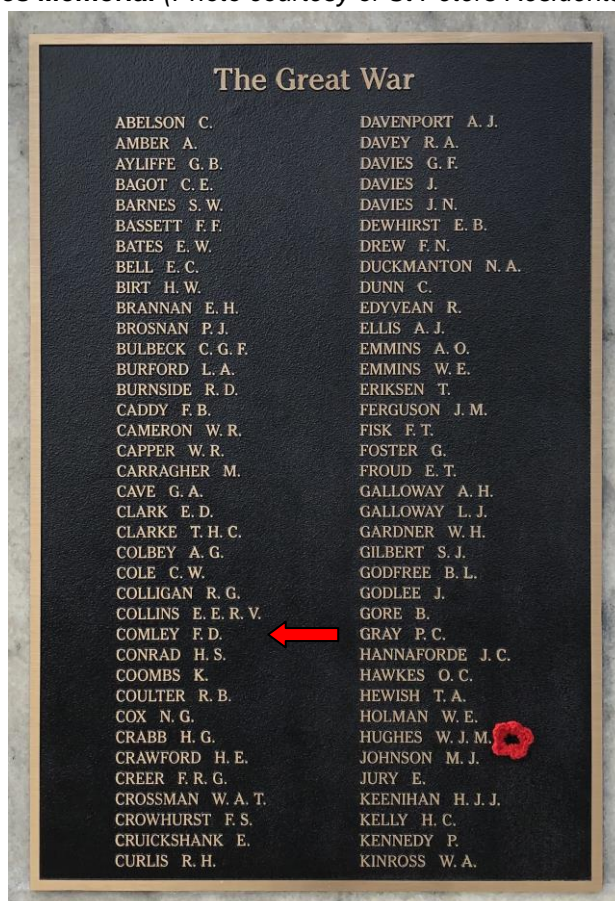


All Souls Anglican Church Honour Board (Photo from Virtual War Memorial Australia)

F. D. Comley is remembered on the St. Peter's Heroes Memorial, located in St. Peters Street, St. Peters, South Australia. The memorial which was erected in 1922 was one of the Great War Memorials that did not feature the names of the fallen. A grant was awarded along with other funding & on 24th April, 2019 the memorial was re-dedicated with the names of 145 men from the suburbs of Hackney, College Park, East Adelaide, St. Peters, Stepney, Evandale and Maylands.



St. Peters Heroes Memorial (Photo courtesy of St Peters Residents Association Inc.)



St. Peters Heroes Memorial (Photo courtesy of St Peters Residents Association Inc.)

F. D. Comley 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)

(59 pages of Private Francis David Comley'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



Newspaper Notices

INTO CAMP ON WEDNESDAY

The following are the names of the men who enlisted at Adelaide and went into the Exhibition camp on Wednesday morning:- F. D. Comley.....

(The Register, Adelaide, South Australia – 30 March, 1916)

LATE WAR CABLES

THE AUSTRALIANS

291st CASUALTY LIST

WOUNDED

36 – Pte F. D. COMLEY, St. Peters

(Observer, Adelaide, South Australia – 5 May, 1917)

THE AUSTRALIANS

321st CASUALTY LIST

WOUNDED

36 – Pte F. D. COMLEY, St. Peters

(Observer, Adelaide, South Australia – 14 July, 1917)

Personal Notes

Mr C. A. Comley, of Loch street, St. Peters, has been advised that his son, Pte F. D. Comley, has been wounded for the second occasion.

(Observer, Adelaide, South Australia – 21 July, 1917)

FOR KING AND COUNTRY

COMLEY – Died on the 31st October, in London General Hospital, from the effects of gas poisoning, Frank, youngest beloved son of C. A. and S. Comley, of St. Peters; previously wounded twice.

(The Register, Adelaide, South Australia – 12 November, 1917) & (The Advertiser, Adelaide, South Australia – 12 November, 1917) & (The Express and Telegraph, Adelaide, South Australia – 12 November, 1917) & (The Register, Adelaide, South Australia – 15 November, 1917) & (The Chronicle, Adelaide, South Australia – 17 November, 1917)

366TH CASUALTY LIST

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

DIED OF WOUNDS

36 – Pte F. D. COMLEY, St. Peters (Oct 31; gas; p.r. wounded; 2nd occ.)

(Observer, Adelaide, South Australia – 15 December, 1917)

HEROES OF THE GREAT WAR

COMLEY – In memory of our Boy Frank, who died October 27, in London Hospital, after three times wounded. We miss him, but shall meet him again where there will be no more suffering and no ore strife. – Inserted by his loving parents, C. A. Comley and family.

(The Advertiser, Adelaide, South Australia – 28 October, 1918)

Private Frank Comley is remembered on his parents' Headstone in Payneham Cemetery, South Australia.



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)

Private F. D. Comley does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

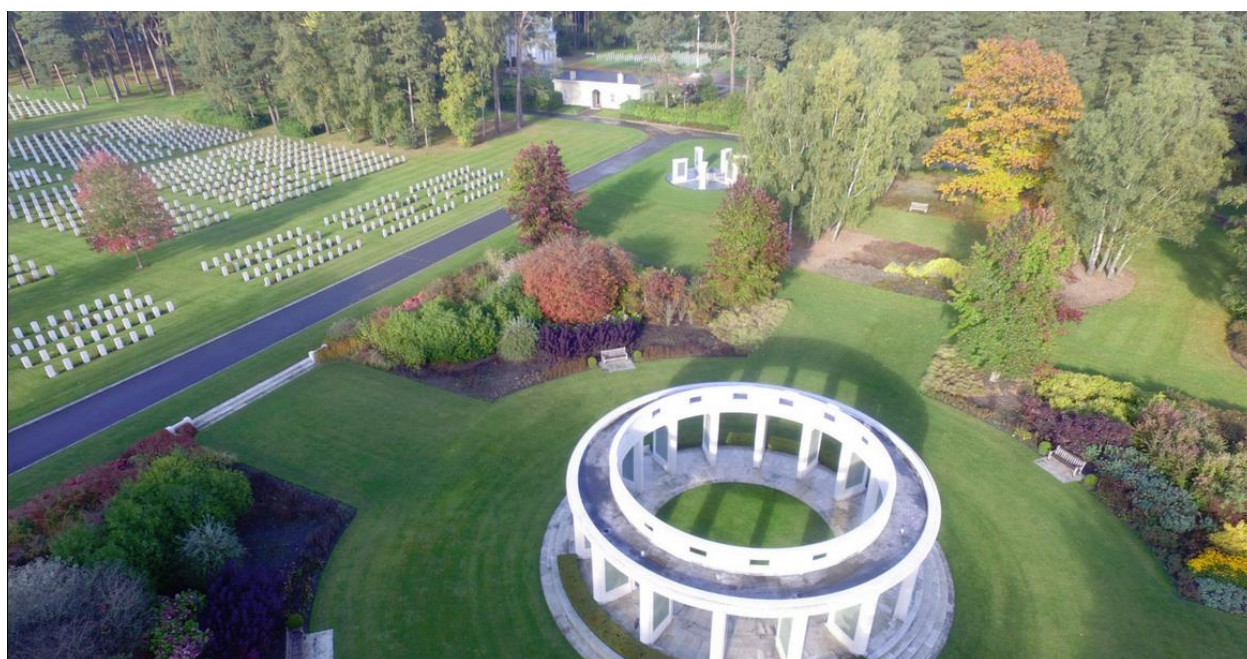
Resting Until He Hears His Saviour Call

Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England

Located 30 miles from London in Surrey, Brookwood Military Cemetery is the largest CWGC cemetery in the United Kingdom. The cemetery contains the graves of more than 1,600 servicemen of the British Empire in the First World War and over 3,470 from the Second World War.

Brookwood Military Cemetery lies adjacent to Brookwood Cemetery (The London Necropolis), a vast space which covers 500 acres. In 1917, an area to the north of the cemetery was set aside as Brookwood Military Cemetery for men and women of Commonwealth forces who died, many of battle wounds, in the London district. This site was further extended to accommodate Commonwealth casualties of the Second World War. *(Information from CWGC)*

There are 446 Australian War Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery – 351 from World War 1 & 95 From World War 2.



Brookwood Military Cemetery *(Photo from CWGC)*



Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photos by Magicfingers)





Australian Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photos by Magicfingers)



Photo of Private F. D. Comley's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England.



(Photo by Wertypop – Find a Grave)

