

**Brookwood Military Cemetery,
Brookwood, Surrey
War Graves**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



27244 DRIVER

F. D. ROBERTSON

AUST. FIELD ARTILLERY

4TH APRIL, 1919 Age 24

*He Liveth In A Land
That Is Fairer Than Day*

Frank Duncan ROBERTSON

Frank Duncan Robertson was born in 1893 at "Bethungra" Park, Illabo, near Junee, New South Wales to parents David and Caroline Mary Robertson (nee Peek).

David Robertson, father of Frank Duncan Robertson, died on 4th June, 1895 at Junee, New South Wales.

Frank Duncan Robertson attended Public School at Junee, NSW & also Grammar School at Wagga Wagga, NSW.

Frank Duncan Robertson was aged 22 years & 11 months, single & a Station Storekeeper from "Rockview," Moruben Road, Mosman, NSW when he enlisted at Marrickville, Sydney, NSW on 15th May, 1916 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 27244 & his religion was Presbyterian. His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs C. M. Robertson, "Rockview," Moruben Road, Mosman, NSW. Frank Robertson stated on his Attestation Papers that he had served for 10 months with Scottish Rifles.

Gunner Frank Duncan Robertson was posted to 4th D.A.C. (Divisional Ammunition Column), 6th Reinforcements on 15th May, 1916 for recruit training. He was transferred on 1st June, 1916 to 7th F.A.B. (Field Artillery Brigade), 4th Reinforcements with the rank of Driver.

Driver Frank Duncan Robertson embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Aeneas (A60)* on 30th September, 1916 with the 7th Field Artillery Brigade, 4th Reinforcements & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 19th November, 1916.

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.

Driver Frank Duncan Robertson was marched in to A.A.T.D. (Australian Artillery Training Depot) at Parkhouse, Wiltshire, England on 19th November, 1916. He was marched out on 18th December, 1916 & marched in to Reserve Brigade Australian Artillery at Larkhill, Wiltshire on the same day.

Driver Frank Duncan Robertson proceeded overseas to France via Folkestone on 15th March, 1917 from R.B.A.A. (Reserve Brigade Australian Artillery) at Larkhill. He was marched in to A.G.B.D. (Australian General Base Depot) at Etaples, France on 16th March, 1917. Driver Robertson was transferred to 1st Divisional Artillery at Etaples on 23rd March, 1917 & was taken on strength of 1st D.A.C. (Divisional Artillery Column) in France on 24th March, 1917.

Driver Frank Duncan Robertson was on Leave to Paris from 7th January, 1918 & rejoined his Unit from Leave on 17th January, 1918.

Driver Frank Duncan Robertson was detached to 1st F.A.B. (Field Artillery Brigade) for duty from 20th January, 1918. He rejoined his Unit from Detachment on 3rd February, 1918.

Driver Frank Duncan Robertson was on Leave to England from 25th February, 1918 & rejoined his Unit from Leave on 13th March, 1918.

Driver Frank Duncan Robertson was detached for duty at Ross Dump from 26th March, 1918 & he rejoined his Unit from detachment on 3rd April, 1918.

Driver Frank Duncan Robertson was reported to still be with his Unit on 8th December, 1918.

Driver Frank Duncan Robertson was on Leave to UK from France from 24th February, 1919 to 12th March, 1919.

Driver Frank Duncan Robertson was granted Leave from 18th March, 1919 to 18th June, 1919 with Pay & Subsistence. Reason: Ironmongery. Attending: W. J. Woodrow, Market House, Brandon, Suffolk.

A Memo to The Commandant, dated 21st April, 1919, reads: "*This afternoon, the Waterside Police reported to me the finding of the body of No. 27244 Driver Robertson, F.D., S.A.A. Col., 1st Aust. D.A.C. in the Thames at 10 am today. The body has been removed to the mortuary in Horseferry Rd, at the rear of these Headquarters. A P.M. has been held and the cause of death will be disclosed at the inquest – which will be held on the forenoon of*

Wednesday, 23rd. I have been subpoenaed to attend the inquest. I have viewed the body, which is in an advanced stage of decomposition. Relatives and friends will be advised of death, inquest and funeral arrangements. The funeral will be at Brookwood on Thursday, 24.4.19."

J.H.F.L.

Reference Supposed suicide of 11th April 1919.

No.27244 Dvr. F.D.Robertson, 1st D.A.C., A.I.F.

(1) The actual occurrence.

An overcoat, pocket book, etc. belonging to this soldier were found on Vauxhall Bridge at about 4.30 a.m. on the 4th April 1919.

Postman W. Brown (2) coming from the South side, heard a splash and saw these articles on the footway about the centre of the bridge. He says that there was a woman standing near them at the time. He asked her what had happened and she replied, "I think there's a soldier gone over". She then walked away towards the South side.

Postman W. Brown (1) came up a minute afterwards from the South side. He passed the woman just before reaching Brown (2). He gives a description of the woman. The two postmen looked over the bridge but could not see anything in the water. There was a strong tide running at the time. He then went on to the North side and told a policeman.

P.C. Toms says that he went to where the clothes had been found. A man who was with him went straight on to the South side to overtake the woman and bring her back, but failed. Toms followed a minute or so later and made enquiries at the Coffee stall there, but could find no trace of her. The woman could have turned to the right or the left on reaching the end of the bridge without being seen from the Coffee stall.

Toms then returned to the centre of the bridge. About 25 yards from where the clothes were found there were 3 or 4 watchmen sitting round a fire. They told the Constable, in reply to his queries, that they had seen an Australian and a woman passing. They said that the two did not appear to be together. They had not heard any cry or sounds of a scuffle.

The body has not yet been recovered.

(11) Report on Dvr. Robertson's movements.

No.27244 Dvr. F.D. Robertson, 1st D.A.C. Aged 25 years. *Single*
Enlisted on the 15th May 1916 at the age of 22. Applied for Non-military employment. This was granted and he was brought over from France for the purpose.

He was granted Non-military employment leave from 18 March to 18 June 1919, and was instructed to report to Mr Woodrow, Ironmonger, Market House, Brandon, Suffolk. Mr Woodrow is a relation by marriage to Robertson's mother.

Dvr. Robertson went to his cousin's Mrs Hammond, Crown Hotel, Soham, Cambs. on the 19th March and stayed there until the 28th March.

On that date he left for London. He passed the night with his friend Gunner West, who is employed at Horticultural Hall. He left West on the 29th saying he was going down to Southampton on the Mid-day train.

He stayed that night at the Esplanade Hotel, Ryde, I. There was a lady with him, who registered as Miss Hilda Kent, Shirwood, Park Gate, Nr. Southampton. They occupied separate rooms. They stayed there until 3rd April.

Miss Kent states that when he left there on the 3rd he intended to travel to Waterloo by a train arriving at 10.12 pm. He wrote a letter to Miss Kent in the train. No further trace as to his movements has been discovered to date.

The following was recorded on the Casualty Form – Active Service in Driver Frank Duncan Robertson's Service Record file: *"The above named soldier is believed to have committed suicide or to have fallen from Lambeth Bridge about 4.30 am on the 4th inst. This soldier's overcoat, haversack, Aust. Hat & pkt book are in possession of A.P.M. London & found by a postman: W. Brown, 75 Hartington Rd., Sth Lambeth. This man, about the time stated, heard a splash in water etc."* Driver Robertson was on Non Military Employment Leave in UK.

Driver Frank Duncan Robertson was found drowned in River Thames on 21st April, 1919. His cause of death was recorded as *"Suicide whilst temporarily insane"* on 4th April, 1919.

A death for Frank D. Robertson, aged 25, was registered in the June quarter, 1919 in the district of St. George Hanover Square, London, England.

Driver Frank Duncan Robertson was buried on 24th April, 1919 in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England – Australian Military Burial Ground - Plot number 183453.

From the burial report of Driver Frank Duncan Robertson - *Coffin was Elm with brass fittings. The deceased soldier was accorded a full Military funeral, Firing Party, Bugler and Pallbearers being in attendance. The coffin was draped with the Australian Flag, and conveyed to the graveside, surmounted by beautiful flowers sent from relatives and friends of deceased. The "Last Post" was sounded at the graveside, and the Chap. W. Floyd Shannon, Pres. Of the A.I.F. Headquarters, London, officiated. The grave will be turfed and an oak cross erected by the A.I.F. London. A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral.*

Names of Relatives or Friends present at the Funeral: Miss Hilda Kent, Mr & Mrs Hammond, Miss Reek & Mr Vacker. (Note: Miss Hilda Kent, Sherwood, Park Gate, Near Southampton was listed on the back of the burial report as "Fiancee".)

The following news clipping was located in Driver Frank Duncan Robertson's Service Record file (no date or name of newspaper listed).

4.30 A.M. LEAP IN RIVER

"PURPOSELESS SUICIDE"

"It is astonishing how often these motiveless suicides crop up," said Mr S. Ingleby Oddie, the Westminster coroner inquiring yesterday into the death of Frank Duncan Robertson, 25, an Australian soldier.

Miss Hilda Kent, a travelling lady's maid, of Parkgate, near Southampton, said she was introduced to Robertson in February 1918, when she was in the W.A.A.C. They were engaged to be married. At the end of last month they were staying with her relatives at Southsea and went to the Isle of Wight. On April 3 she saw him off to London from Bembridge Station. Next day she received a note which he had written in the train and posted at Portsmouth:

My own Darling.-Just a line to let you know I am well. Will write a long letter to-morrow. All my love.-Your loving FRANK

W. Brown, a postman, said that at 4.30 a.m. on April 4 he saw a young woman standing on the pavement on Vauxhall Bridge in front of a heap of khaki clothing. When within ten yards of the woman he heard a splash in the

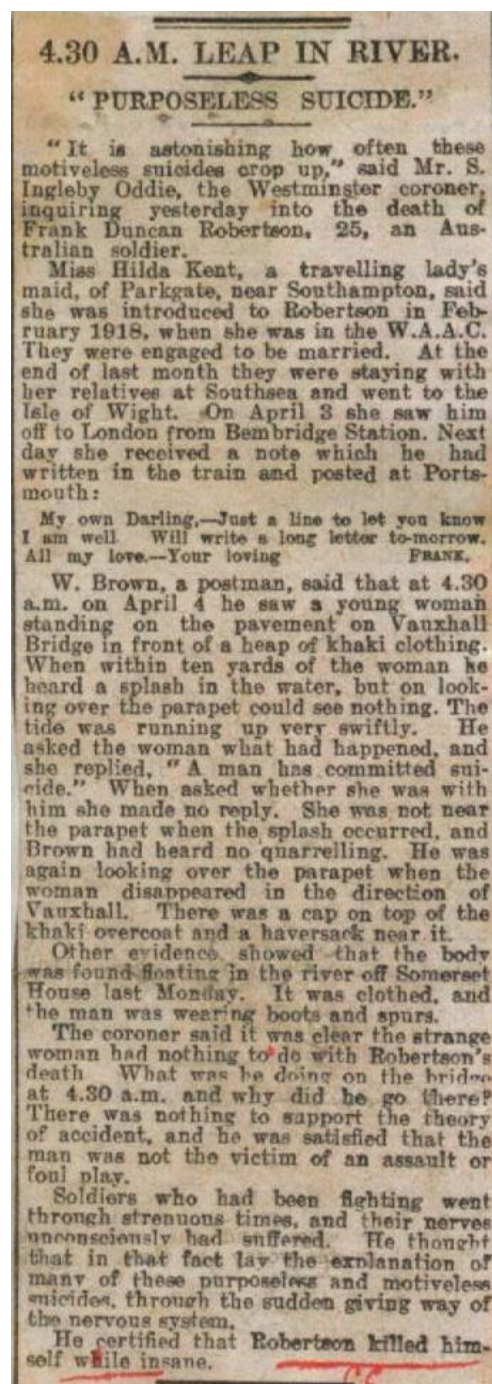
water, but on looking over the parapet could see nothing. The tide was running very swiftly. He asked the woman what had happened, and she replied, "A man has committed suicide." When asked whether she was with him she made no reply. She was not near the parapet when the splash occurred, and Brown had heard no quarrelling. He was again looking over the parapet when the woman disappeared in the direction of Vauxhall. There was a cap on top of the khaki overcoat and a haversack near it.

Other evidence showed that the body was found floating in the river off Somerset House last Monday. It was clothed, and the man was wearing boots and spurs.

The coroner said that it was clear the strange woman had nothing to do with Robertson's death. What was he doing on the bridge at 4.30 a.m. and why did he go there? There was nothing to support a theory of accident, and he was satisfied that the man was not the victim of assault or foul play.

Soldiers who had been fighting went through strenuous times, and their nerves unconsciously suffered. He thought that in that fact lay the explanation of many of these purposeless and motiveless suicides, through the sudden giving way of the nervous system.

He certified that Robertson killed himself while insane."



The Public Trustee Office, Sydney, NSW wrote to Base Records on 31st July, 1919 requesting a Certificate in duplicate relating to the death of 27244 Franck Duncan Robertson.

Base Records replied on 7th August, 1919 enclosing the certificate in duplicate of report of death of the late No. 27244 Driver F. D. Robertson, 1st Divisional Ammunition Column.

Base Records wrote to Mrs C. M. Robertson, Rockview, Moruben Road, Mosman, NSW on 8th October, 1919 with the following "*With reference to the report of the regrettable loss of your son, the late No. 27244, Driver F. D. Robertson, 1st Divisional Ammunition Column, I am now in receipt of advice which show that he was found drowned in the River Thames, London on 4.4.19. His body was interred in Australian Military Burial Ground, Brookwood, separate single grave in Virgin soil.*" The letter continues with details of the Burial Report (as listed above).

Base Records wrote to Mrs C. M. Robertson, "Cooinoo", Kimberly Avenue, Lane Cove, NSW on 26th June, 1923 to advise that the site of her son's grave in Brookwood Military Cemetery had been officially registered as Plot 4 Row J Grave 4.

This is now recorded by CWGC as Memorial reference – IV. J. 4. Driver Frank Duncan Robertson now has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Frank Duncan Robertson requested in his Will, dated 26th July, 1917 that all his estate both real and personal be bequeathed to his mother Caroline Mary Robertson of Rockview, Mornben Road, Mosman.

Mrs C. M. Robertson, "Candelo" Sackville Street, Be____, wrote to Base Records in August, 1921 with the following "*I thank you very much for Book and card received which I prize, also the Kings message of sympathy to us poor mothers. My dear boys death was such a tragedy coming home and cruelly murdered, had he been slain on the battle field it would not be as hard to bear.*"

In information provided by his mother for the Roll of Honour – she stated that Driver Frank Duncan Robertson had been robbed and drowned in River Thames in London.

Mrs C. M. Robertson, "Jessamine" Fox Street, Longueville, NSW, wrote to Base Records on 16th February, 1920 to thank them very much for the two photographs of the grave of her late son Driver Frank Duncan Robertson.

Base Records contacted Mrs C. M. Robertson, "Jessamine" Fox Street, Longueville, NSW, on 24th March, 1921 stating that she was registered as the next-of-kin of the late No. 27244 Driver F. D. Robertson, but requested to know if there were any nearer blood relatives than herself & was specifically asked if his father was still alive due to the "Deceased Soldiers Estates Act 1918" which stated that the War Medals & Mementoes of a deceased soldier were to be handed in the following order of relationship – Widow, eldest surviving son, eldest surviving daughter, father, mother, eldest surviving brother, eldest surviving sister etc.

Mrs C. M. Robertson, of "Glenesda", 26 Oak Street, Ashfield, NSW, replied to Base Records on 6th April, 1921 stating "*I am nearest relative, his mother and shall be pleased to receive a war medal.*"

Base Records replied to Mrs C. M. Robertson on 21st April, 1921 stating that they would "*...be much obliged if you will favour me with definite information as to whether the late soldier's father is living, and if so his present address. I regret that this procedure is necessary, but the instructions under the Deceased Soldiers' Estates Act of 1918 demand that in cases where the soldier was not married, the father's claims must be considered first, unless there are good and sufficient reasons for varying the procedure...*"

Mrs C. M. Robertson, of "Glenesda", 26 Oak Street, Ashfield, NSW, replied to Base Records on 23rd April, 1921 stating that Driver F. D. Robertson's father was dead.

Driver Frank Duncan Robertson was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Driver Robertson's widowed mother – Mrs C. M. Robertson, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent July, 1921 & Plaque sent November, 1922).

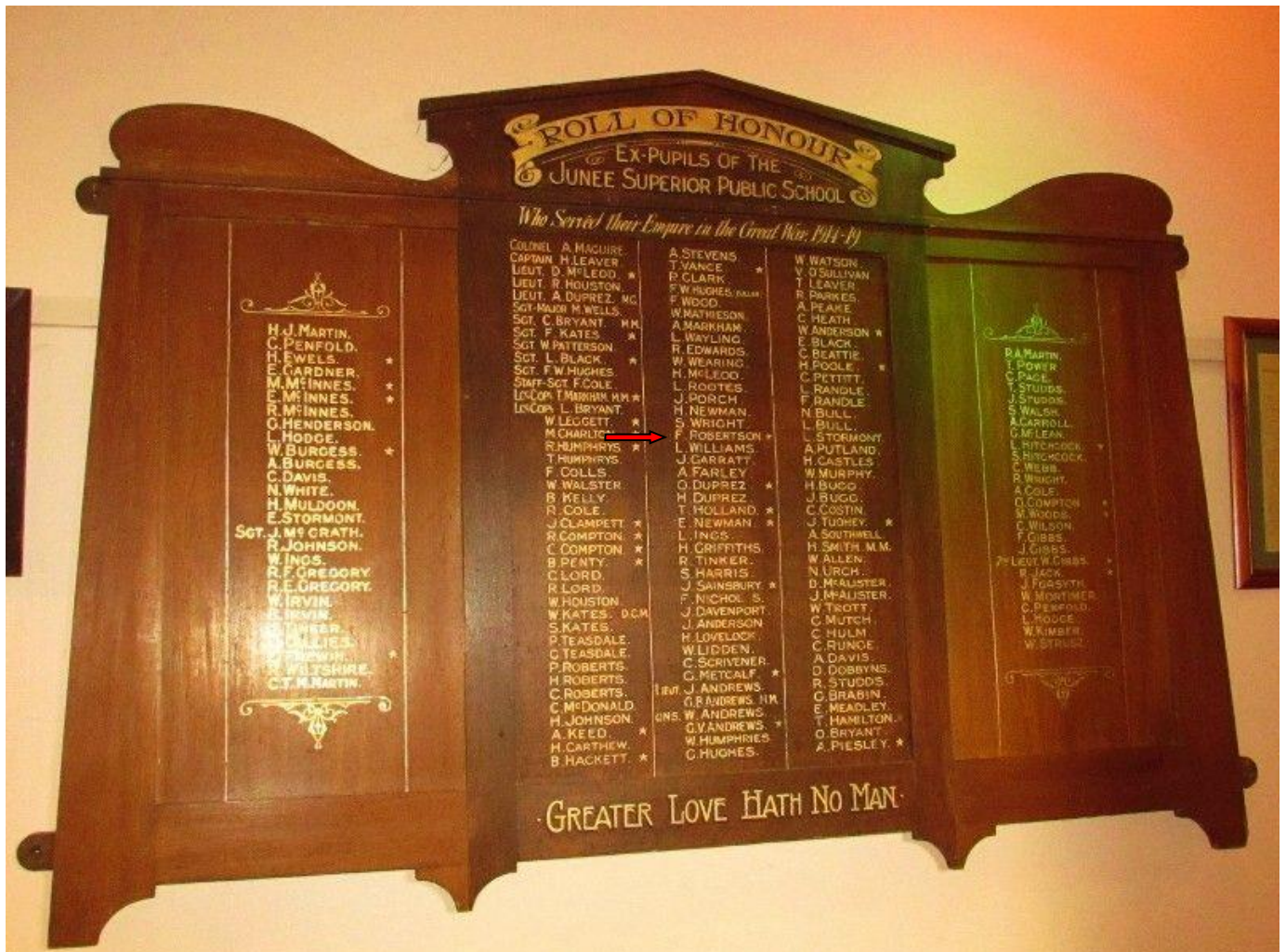
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Driver Frank Duncan Robertson – service number 27244, aged 24, of 1st Div. Ammunition Col., Australian Field Artillery. He was the son of David and Caroline Mary Robertson, of “Jessamine,” Fox St., Longueville, New South Wales.

Driver F. D. Robertson is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 21.

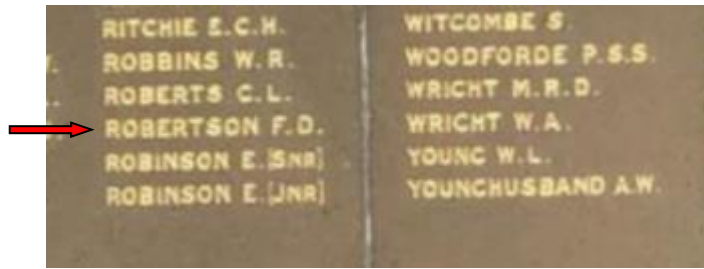


Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

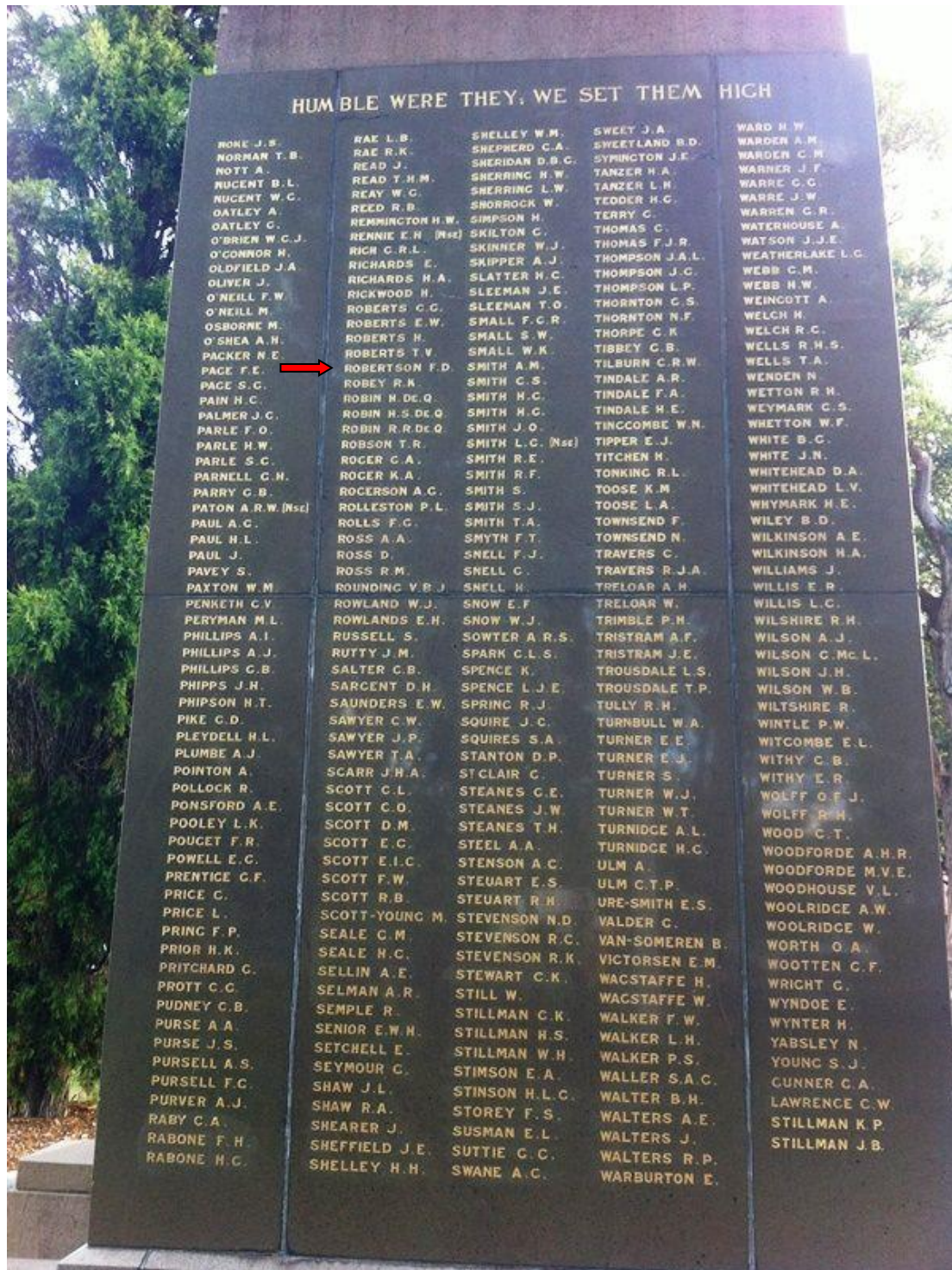
F. Robertson is remembered on the Junee Superior Public School Roll of Honour, located in Broadway Museum (old Broadway Hotel), 86 Broadway, Junee, NSW.



Junee Superior Public School Roll of Honour (Photo from Monument Australia – Sandra Brown)



Note: F. D. Robertson is also named on the Mosman War Memorial Panel (shown below) but this relates to another Soldier who was also from the Mosman area – Fergus Diack Robertson.



(Photo from Monument Australia – Heather Stevens)

Fk. D. Robertson is remembered on the St. Kirk Presbyterian Church Honour Board for Mosman which is located in Mosman Library, 605 Military Road, Mosman, NSW.



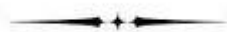
(66 pages of Driver Frank Duncan Robertson's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

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





Frank Duncan Robertson



Newspaper Notices

MYSTERIOUS SUICIDE

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER'S END:

A MOTIVELESS DEED

A remarkable story was told on Wednesday afternoon when the Warminster coroner held an enquiry concerning the death of Driver Frank Duncan Robertson (25), of the Australian Imperial Force, lately of Mosman, New South Wales, who was found dead in the Thames on Monday morning. The evidence showed that Robertson had come to London for training in a trade, and was attached to the headquarters staff at Horseferry-road, S.W. He was in very good health and his financial position was quite sound.

Miss Hilda Kemp, of Sherwood Park Gate, near Southampton, a travelling lady's maid, said she was introduced to Robertson in February, 1918, at Hastings, where she was in the W.A.A.C., and they were engaged to be married. It was not arranged whether they would get married here or in Australia. They had stayed with some of her own relatives at the Isle of Wight, and she saw him off the Membridge Station on April 3, when he seemed quite happy. They had made arrangements to go to Torquay for a holiday. Witness was then in Lady Thorneycroft's service. On April 4 she received a note from him written in the train. It read: "My darling, - Just a line to let you know I am well, Will write a long letter to-morrow. All my love. - Your loving Frank." That was the last she heard of him.

A postman stated that at 4.30 am on April 4, while crossing Vauxhall Bridge, he saw a young woman standing on the pavement close to a heap of khaki clothing. When he got within ten yards of her he heard a splash in the river, but, on looking over the parapet, he could see nothing. The tide was running very swiftly. Witness said to the woman, "What has happened?" and she replied, "A man has just committed suicide." When asked whether she had been with him she made no reply, and while his back was turned she walked off towards the south side of the bridge. The woman was not near the parapet when the man went over, and there had been no quarrelling or shouting.

The body was found floating in the river off Somerset House at noon on Easter Monday.

The Coroner said the case was a difficult one to decide, but it was clear that the woman whom the postman saw had nothing to do with the man's going over the parapet. He was satisfied that the death was not due to any assault or foul play, but that it was a case of suicide, and, in the absence of any motive, he would assume that the man was not responsible for his actions. When soldiers had been abroad fighting their nerves unconsciously suffered. He thought that in that fact lay the explanation of many of those motiveless and purposeless suicides that occurred so frequently.

He certified that the deceased committed suicide whilst in a state of unsound mind.

(Western Mail, Cardiff, Glamorgan, Wales - 24 April, 1919)

WHAT A POSTMAN SAW

EARLY MORNING SUICIDE OF AN AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

Giving evidence at a Westminster inquest, William Brown, a postman, said that at 4.30 am on 4 April, while crossing Vauxhall Bridge, he saw a young woman standing on the pavement close to a heap of khaki clothing.

When he got within 10 yards of her he heard a splash in the river, which was running very swiftly, but he could see nothing in the water. He asked the woman what had happened, and she replied: "A man has just committed suicide," afterwards walking off towards the south side of the river.

The body, that of Driver Frank Duncan Robertson, aged 25, an Australian soldier attached to the Headquarters Staff at Horseferry-road, was recovered on Monday last.

The Coroner, in certifying that Robertson committed suicide whilst of unsound mind, said he was satisfied that the woman whom Brown saw had nothing to do with the man's going over the bridge.

(Birmingham Daily Gazette, Warwickshire, England – 25 April, 1919)

A SOLDIER'S DEATH

At an inquest into the death of Driver F. D. Robertson, an Australian, who was found drowned in the Thames, near Vauxhall Bridge, Miss Young, a Southampton woman, gave evidence that she met Robertson at Hastings in 1918, when she was serving in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. They became engaged, and she received affectionate letters from him until a few days ago. A verdict of suicide while temporarily insane was returned. The coroner remarked on the absence of motive, and said they must presume it was a case of suicide after nerve-racking battle experiences.

(Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner's Advocate, NSW – 5 May, 1919)

(Similar articles in The Daily Telegraph, Sydney, NSW 5 May, 1919 & The Farmer and Settler, Sydney 16 May, 1919)

ROLL OF HONOUR

ROBERTSON – Drowned in River Thames, while on furlough in London, after two years' active service in France and Belgium, Driver Frank Duncan, beloved youngest son of Mrs C. M. Robertson, and the late David Robertson, of Rock View, Junee, aged 24 years. "Home in July, mother."

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 28 May, 1919)

466th CASUALTY LIST

DIED OTHER CAUSES

Dvr FRANK DUNCAN ROBERTSON, Mosman, 4/4/19, drowned.

(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 20 June, 1919)

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)

Mrs C. M. Robertson, "Jessamine" Fox Street, Longueville, NSW, wrote to Base Records on 20th February, 1920, stating she had forwarded the form filled in for the grave of her late son Driver Frank Duncan Robertson "*and I am not sure whether the Department have the words added I loving memory of not. Will you kindly have it done at my expense, also the personal inscription He liveth in a Land that is fairer than day.*"

Base Records replied on 30th April, 1920 to advise "*....with the exception of the personal inscription all headstones will be uniform, therefore the words "In loving memory" cannot be inscribed, unless you desire to prefix them to the personal inscription you have chosen. Please advise if you so wish, when the necessary alteration will be made to the form.*"

Driver F. D. Robertson does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

He Liveth In A Land That Is Fairer Than Day

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)*



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

D00185

A large crowd attends an A.I.F. military funeral at Brookwood Cemetery. In the foreground wooden crosses mark rows of graves. (Photo c1919)

Identified: Front row, left to right: Second Lieutenant Douglas Abbott Ferguson, Australian Flying Corps, died of accidental injuries 18 August 1918; Lieutenant (Lt) Francis John Smedley MC, 7th Battalion, died of wounds 20 August 1918.

Second row: 6860 Private (Pte) James Alexander McKeown, 21st Battalion, died of wounds 20 June 1918; 3622 Pte S T Wilson, 2nd Australian Pioneers, died of wounds 4 July 1918; 2390 Sergeant Frederick Charles Stronell, 21st Battalion, died of wounds 9 July 1918; Lt Arthur Melville Lilburne MC, 6th Brigade Australian Field Artillery, died of disease 11 July 1918.



Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photos by Magicfingers)



Australian Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery (Photos by Magicfingers)





Australian War Graves (Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher)



Australian War Graves (Photo courtesy of Neil Bright 2020)

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





(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher – Jan 2021)

