

**St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard,
Harefield, Middlesex, England**

War Graves



Lest We Forget

World War 1



5196 CORPORAL

BERT SMITH

49TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.

18TH JULY, 1917 Age 22

**Note: Battalion number is incorrect on the Headstone - should be 49th Battalion*

Bert SMITH

Bertie Smith was born at Oakland, Richmond River, NSW in 1895 to parents Ernest John and Sarah Ann Smith (nee Bostock/Bustard).

Bert Smith was a 28 year old, single, Sawyer from Oaklands, via Coraki, NSW when he enlisted at Lismore, NSW on 25th September, 1915 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 5196 & his religion was Baptist. His next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs Sarah Ann Smith from Oaklands, via Coraki, NSW. His younger brother Leslie George Smith, Labourer, aged 19 enlisted on 22nd September, 1915 & was given a service number of 5197. Bert Smith stated on his Attestation Papers that he had served for 1 year with Senior Cadets &

Private Bert Smith was posted to No. 7 Depot Battalion on 25th September, 1915 for recruit training. He was transferred to 16th Reinforcements of 9th Battalion on 16th January, 1916.

Private Bert Smith embarked from Sydney, NSW on HMAT *Star of Victoria (A16)* on 31st March, 1916 with the 9th Infantry Battalion, 16th Reinforcements & disembarked at Port Said on 5th May, 1916.

Private Bert Smith was reallocated from 16th Reinforcements for 9th Battalion to Reinforcements of 49th Battalion on 24th May, 1916.

Private Bert Smith embarked from Alexandria on 7th June, 1916 on Troopship *Huntspill* & disembarked at Marseilles, France on 14th June, 1916.

Private Bert Smith was appointed to E.D.P. (extra duty pay) Corporal at 4th A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) to date from 7th June, 1916.

E.D.P. Corporal Bert Smith was taken on strength of 49th Battalion in France on 20th August, 1916. As a result of being taken on strength of 49th Battalion he reverted to grade of Private from 20th August, 1916.

Private Bert Smith was appointed Lance Corporal with 49th Battalion on 13th December, 1916.

Lance Corporal Bert Smith was to be Corporal from 29th January, 1917, vice Corporal Bennett promoted to Sergeant.

Corporal Bert Smith was wounded in action on 5th April, 1917. He was admitted to 13th Australian Field Ambulance with G.S.W (gunshot wound/s) to right leg. Corporal Smith was transferred to Casualty Clearing Station on 6th April, 1917 then transferred & admitted to 6th General Hospital at Rouen, France on 7th April, 1917. He embarked for England from Havre, France on 16th April, 1917 on Hospital Ship *Panama*.

49th Battalion

The 49th Battalion was raised in Egypt on 27 February 1916 as part of the "doubling" of the AIF. Approximately half of its recruits were Gallipoli veterans from the 9th Battalion, and the other half, fresh reinforcements from Australia. Reflecting the composition of the 9th, the 49th was predominantly composed of men from Queensland. The battalion became part of the 13th Brigade of the 4th Australian Division.

Arriving in France on 12 June 1916, the 49th moved into the trenches of the Western Front for the first time on 21 June. It fought in its first major battle at Mouquet Farm in August and suffered heavily, particularly in the assault launched on 3 September. The battalion saw out the rest of the year alternating between front-line duty, and training and labouring behind the line. This routine continued through the bleak winter of 1916-17.

Early in 1917, the battalion participated in the advance that followed the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line, supporting the 13th Brigade's attack at Noreuil on 2 April. 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 on 9 June and the battle of Polygon Wood on 26 September. Another winter of trench routine followed.....

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

War Diary – 49th Battalion

NOREUIL – 5th April, 1917:

“C” Co. & 1 Platoon of “D” Co attacked & captured railway line, approximately C.4.b.7.7 to C.5 central & established touch with C. CO. (Operation order destroyed in action).

(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Corporal Bert Smith was admitted to 2nd Southern General Hospital at Bristol, England on 16th April, 1917 with G.S.W to right leg, compound fracture of Tibia & Fibula. He was transferred to 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield, Middlesex, England on 3rd July, 1917. The Hospital Admissions form recorded *“still much discharge of pus. Fracture not uniting.”*

A Medical Report was completed on Corporal Bert Smith on 5th July, 1917 at 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield. His disability was listed as *“G.S.W. Right Leg, compound comminuted fracture of right Tibia and Fibula.”* The injury had occurred on 5th April, 1917 near Bapume, France & the fracture was just above the ankle joint. *“The wounds have been in a septic condition.”* His present condition was listed as such: *“There is much discharge of pus from wounds in lower 1/3 of right leg. Owing to septic condition of wounds and amount of dead bone very little callus has yet been formed. X ray of 6.7.17 shows transverse fracture of tibia and fibula 2 ½ inches above ankle. ?sequiestrum. Large piece metal above fracture to outer side of tibia and a small piece below fracture.”* The disability was stated to be caused from Active Service and no operation had been performed. The Medical Officer in charge of the case recommended that Corporal Smith be discharged as permanently unfit. The Medical Board found that Corporal Smith was permanently unfit for General Service & unfit for Home Service for 6 months.

Corporal Bert Smith died on 18th July, 1917 at 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield, Middlesex, England from Chloroform Asphyxia & Cardiac Failure.

A death for Bert Smith, aged 22, was registered in the September quarter, 1917 in the district of Uxbridge, Middlesex, England.

Corporal Bert Smith was buried at 2.30 pm on 20th July, 1917 in St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England – Plot number Aust. 31 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Corporal Bert Smith - *Coffin was good polished Elm. The deceased soldier was accorded a Military Funeral with full honours. The coffin was placed on a gun carriage supplied by the Hounslow Barracks, and was draped with the Australian Flag. Firing Party was furnished by members of the Administrative Headquarters (London) Guard A.I.F. and Band and Bugler attached to No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield Hospital, were in attendance. There was a large party of mourners from the Hospital. The body was borne to the graveside by ward companions of the deceased N.C.O. Chaplain Rev. Gregg Macgregor conducted the pre-burial service in the Harefield Parish Church and officiated at the graveside. Wreaths were sent, four in all, from the patients, Nursing Staff, and friend at Harefield, one being from members of the Leake Family at Harefield. An Uncle of the deceased soldier, Mr T. A. Smith of the George and Dragon Hotel, Marlow, Bucks, was present and expressed his gratification of the funeral arrangements. A temporary oak cross will be erected by the Harefield Committee who are attending to the graves pending the erection by them of a Headstone.*

Corporal Bert Smith was entitled to British War Medal & Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Corporal Smith's father – Mr E. J. Smith, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent February, 1922 & Plaque sent July, 1922).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Corporal Bert Smith – service number 5196, aged 22, of 49th Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of Ernest John and Sarah Ann Smith, of Oakland, Richmond River, New South Wales.

Corporal B. Smith is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 149.



Roll of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

B. Smith is remembered on the Coraki Honour Board, located at Shire Council, Adams Street, Coraki, NSW.



Coraki Honour Board (Photo from AWM – Places of Pride – Mid-Richmond Historical Society Museum)

B. Smith is remembered on the Coraki War Memorial, located in Memorial Park, Richmond Street, Coraki, NSW.



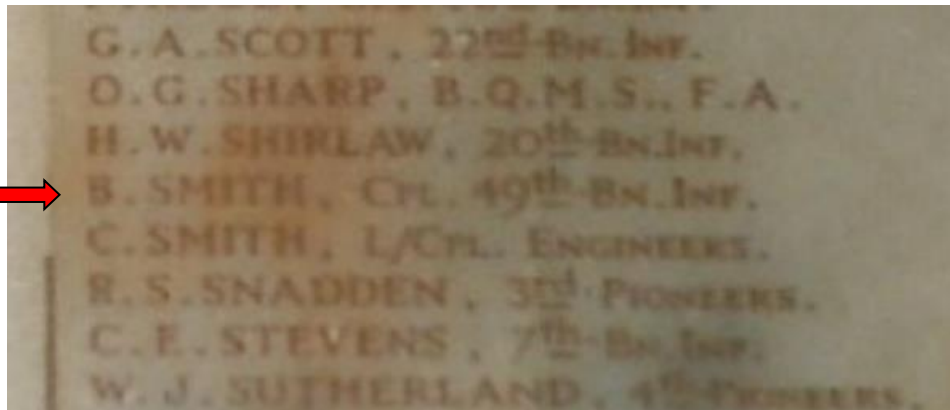
Coraki War Memorial (Photos from AWM – Places of Pride – Kevin McSweeney)



B Smith is remembered on the Australian Soldiers' Memorial in St. Mary the Virgin Church, Church Hill, Harefield, Middlesex, England.



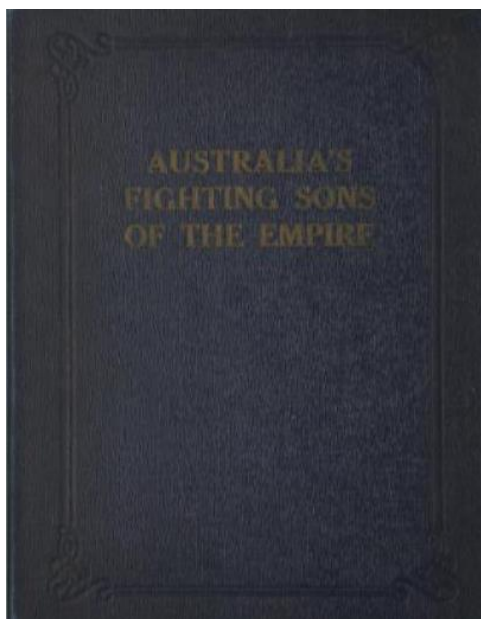
Australian Soldiers' Memorial, Harefield (Photo from War Memorials Online – B. Wood)



(36 pages of Corporal Bert Smith'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

AUSTRALIA'S FIGHTING SONS OF THE EMPIRE



Page 60:



These two boys are the sons of Sarah and Ernest Smith, of Oakland, Coraki,

Corporal BERT SMITH

Corporal Bert Smith (5196) was born and educated at Oakland, and enlisted at Lismore about September, 1915. After training for about six months at Ennoggera Camp, he left Sydney for Egypt on 1st April, 1916, and one month later sailed for France. He took part in many of the big pushes, and was wounded in the right leg, and after much suffering, he died on 18th July, 1917, being buried at Harefield.

Private LESLIE GEORGE SMITH

Private Leslie George Smith enlisted with his brother Bert, and has taken part in all the big engagements in France. He is still well, and is now a transport driver.

Newspaper Notices

Acknowledgments from the Boys

Miss Marion Yabsley, secretary of the Girl's Patriotic League, is in receipt of the following additional acknowledgements:-

From Pte. Bert. Smith (France): — "I am writing to thank you for the parcel which I received from the League on the 4th of the month (January,) I much appreciated the gift, the articles being very acceptable. Our battalion was out resting during Xmas, and we spent a happy time. We are again at the front and doing well. Everything is quiet along the line. Wishing the League all success and again thanking you for your kindness."

From Pte. L. G. Smith (France.) : — It is with great pleasure that I write these few lines, thanking you for the kindness you have shown to the lads (who have left the little township of Coraki to do their duty in fighting for their King and country) by sending us parcels, which, I can tell you honestly, are very highly appreciated by all who receive them. There are always a lot of mates around when the parcels are being opened, just to see what is sent from Australia. Yes "Australia" is the motto' of us all. But this terrible war must be brought to a successful end, and this much we Australian lads are prepared to do. No doubt it is very hard for us at the present time. It is not only the enemy's fire, for we do not mind that at all. It is the cold and snow which are the worst. But still we can fight on through it all, because we know we have the enemy beaten and before long our hardships will be over, with a victorious ending in favor of the Allies. Then we know when we arrive home at our respective towns we shall be warmly welcomed for what we have done. Since I left I have met many of the Coraki lads over here in France, and sorry to say some have gone under. But I trust all who have been left to the present time may be spared to return and also have the same luck as my brother and I have. Thanking you once again for your kindness in forwarding the parcel, and trusting that your League may be well rewarded for the work it is doing for us over here.

(The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser, NSW – 6 April, 1917).

PERSONAL

Mr and Mrs E. J. Smith, of Oakland, have been advised that their son, Bert, has died in a military hospital. Deceased was a native of this district. Mr T. Smith, of Tuntable Creek, is a brother.

(Northern Star, Lismore, NSW – 26 July, 1917)

CORAKI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

... Prior to the Council rising a motion of condolence to Mr and Mrs E. J. Smith and family, of Oakland, was carried in connection with the death of their son, Private Bert Smith, at the front.

(Northern Star, Lismore, NSW – 26 July, 1917)

CORAKI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

The Mayor, before the Council rose, made a touching reference to the death at the front of Pte Bert Smith, son of Mr E. J. Smith, of Oakland. The sad news had just come through, and he felt sure it would be received with sorrow by friends of a family, which was represented by two sons in the firing line. He moved that a letter of sympathy be forwarded to the parents from the Council.

The motion was carried in the usual manner.

(The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser, NSW – 27 July, 1917).

War Notes

News reached Coraki on Monday evening of the death in a military hospital, in England, of Pte. Bert Smith, son of Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Smith, of Oakland, the sad event having occurred, apparently, while the patient was undergoing an operation. The deceased lad was very popular with all who knew him locally, and it will be well recollected that he only succeeded in enlisting after several attempts. The news of his death came as a great shock to friends of the family, to whom the deep sympathy of the district goes out in the loss they have sustained in the struggle for the world's freedom. Another son is still at the front. Touching reference was made to the sad news at Monday night's meeting of the Council.

(The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser, NSW – 27 July, 1917).

ROLL OF HONOR

SMITH – On 18th July, at 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital, England, Corporal Bert Smith, 49th Battalion, A.I.F., primary chloroform asphyxia; secondary, cardiac failure.

He gave his life for his country.

Inserted by his parents, Mr and Mrs E. J. Smith, Oakland, Coraki.

(The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser, NSW – 27 July, 1917).

CASUALTIES

328th LIST

NEW SOUTH WALES

DIED OF WOUNDS OR OTHER CAUSES

Cpl. B. SMITH, Oaklands

(Daily Advertiser, Wagga Wagga, NSW – 2 August, 1917)

Memorial Service at Oakland

A most impressive memorial service with special reference to the late Corporal Bert Smith, of the 49th Battalion A.I.F., was hold on Sunday morning last, in the Oakland Baptist Church, the preacher being Pastor J. Hunter. Corporal Smith was a son of Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Smith, of Oakland, and practically the whole of his life was spent in that locality. He was well and widely known, and his popularity gained him many close friendships. He was esteemed for his quiet disposition and manliness and his readiness to at all times defend the right. His exemplary life and character, and his Christian consistency and unselfishness gained him the respect and admiration of all who knew him. His life was a tower of strength among his fellows. Although engaged in the timber industry, his spare moments wore devoted to the study of military matters and he was proud of his connection with the Senior Cadets, being ever ambitious to work himself up to the topmost rung of the ladder. In September of 1915, he enlisted, together with his brother, Leslie, and throughout the two brothers were side by side. Bert, however, was unfortunately wounded on the 5th April of this year, and received the soldier's joy "Blighty." For three months he was laid up in hospital with a fractured leg which eventually led to his death, on the 18th July last, at the age of 22 years. Thus ended a bright and useful life. To pay a lasting tribute to his memory, his many friends and relatives attended the service on Sunday. The little church was crowded to the doors, and many, unfortunately had to remain without. The preacher took for his subject, "The Supreme Sacrifice," the words of the text being contained in the 15th chapter of St. John and 13th verse : "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The war, he said, had brought home to us several important facts; such, for instance, as "Realisation of the value of men, what they can

endure and what they will sacrifice for the land they love so well." The nature of a supreme sacrifice was clearly shown, and illustrated from a scriptural point of view. Christ paid the supreme sacrifice, and an analysis of the text reveals a willingness to die, but Christ was not only willing He actually did it. He laid down His life for His friends. Sacrifice then was the true test of love. After a detailed account of how Christ's friends had treated him, it was shown that the spirit of self-sacrifice is still manifesting itself everywhere. Men to-day are sacrificing themselves on the battle fields far away from their friends at home. Referring to Corporal Bert Smith, he said that, when war broke out, Bert did not go about the streets boasting that he was going to the war, and then hang back. He was not given to boasting. He silently thought on his duty, saw it and did it. When the call "Send us reinforcements" came, he did not wait for the supreme appeal to go. He did not wait to see the result of the referendum. He did not wait for Australia to compel him to go, but went with a willing heart and offered himself to go and fight for his King, country, and friends. He realised that if the enemy came to his beloved land the result would be disastrous. He thought of what may happen to this fair land, to parents and friends, and he was willing to give if need be his life for them. "Sweet and honorable it is to do something for one's country", Bert was willing to sacrifice himself. He made the supreme sacrifice by dying for his friends. "And greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend." The good that men do will live after them. All the sacrifices made have a voice and no sacrifice made in this war will be in vain. Words of solace and comfort were spoken to the bereaved ones, and the service concluded with hymn No. 103 in the new edition of sacred songs and solos. The opening hymn was 647 and hymns 545 and 321 were also sung. The readings were taken from 40th chapter of Isaiah, and St. John 15th chapter.

(The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser, NSW – 24 August, 1917).

The Late Pte Bert Smith

Writing from Bishop's Knoll Hospital, Stoke Bishop, Bristol, Eng., on October 3rd, to Miss Corallie Marriott, of Ruthven, the Superintendent (Mr. R. Bush) says: "Corporal Bert Smith did not die in this hospital, but I have heard that he died in the operating theatre. He was in this hospital for a few months. He came in most shockingly wounded in the leg, but he slowly improved until he was, to our regret, transferred to the other hospital. He gained the admiration and esteem of everybody connected with my hospital on account of his manly character, and the great fortitude and bravery he showed so uncomplainingly in spite of the terrible pain he must have suffered from time to time. As he died at Harefield, which is over 100 miles from here, I have no means of telling you what kind of a grave he is buried in, but I think you may rest assured that this matter was arranged satisfactorily by the Australian military authorities. I know that they take steps to mark the last resting place of every Australian who dies in this country with a stout oaken cross, with the man's name and regiment on in paint and varnished, and I believe that they intend sending a photograph of each grave to the next of kin. Had he thought that he was likely to die when he was in my hospital, no doubt he would have said something to some of us about his loved ones in Australia, but as he died far away from here it gives me very great regret that I am unable to answer so very natural a question. He was a man I thought much of during the months he was with us, and I had many conversations with him, and I felt on hearing of his death that Australia and the Empire had lost another splendid type of British manhood, and I can do nothing more than offer you my most respectful sympathy."

(The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser, NSW – 21 December, 1917).

ROLL OF HONOR

SMITH – In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Corporal Bert Smith, who died July 18th, 1917.

In a hero's grave far away,

Our dear boy lies asleep.

He braved the fields of battle

Now, God his soul will keep.

We cannot hail him back

For God knows what is best;

Though evermore we'll miss him,
We'll not disturb his rest.

Inserted by his sorrowing father and mother, brothers and sisters, Mr and rs E. J. Smith and family, of Oakland, Coraki.

(Northern Star, Lismore, NSW – 18 July, 1918)

ROLL OF HONOR

SMITH – In loving memory of No. 5196 Corporal Bert Smith, late “C” Company, 49th Battalion, A.I.F., who died in Harefield (England) Hospital, 18th July, 1917, from wounds received April 5th, 1917, whilst fighting for King and Country.

Gone, but not forgotten.

“Greater love hath no man than this,
that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

(The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser, NSW – 19 July, 1918).

ROLL OF HONOR

SMITH – In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Corporal Bert Smith, who died of wounds at Harefield, England, on July 18th, 1917.

“Greater love hath no man than this
that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

Inserted by his loving parents, brothers and sisters.

(Northern Star, Lismore, NSW – 18 July, 1919)

ROLL OF HONOR

SMITH – In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Corporal Bert Smith, 49th Battalion, who died of wounds received in France at Harefield Hospital, July 18th, 1917. Aged 22 years.

Not dead to use, we loved him dear,

Not lost but gone before;

He lives with us in memory still,

And will for evermore.

Inserted by his loving parents, sisters and brothers.

(The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser, NSW – 20 July, 1920).

ROLL OF HONOR

SMITH – In loving memory of No. 5196, Cpl. Bert Smith, who died of wounds at Harefield Hospital, 18th July, 1917.

His country called, and honor bade him go
To battle 'gainst a grim and deadly foe;
He helped to bring Australia into fame,
To build for her a never dying name.
Foremost was he, in thickest strife,
For King and country laid down his life.

Inserted by his loving parents, brothers and sisters.

(The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser, NSW – 19 July, 1921).

ROLL OF HONOR

SMITH – In loving memory of our dear son and brother, Bert, who died of wounds in Harefield Hospital, England, 18th July, 1917.

He fell ! A hero in the deadly strife,
For King and country he laid down his life.
Fame was achieved, and he had done his share,
To win those laurels, rich and rare,
Which now adorn Australia's loyal race,
Not even time its glory can efface.

Inserted by his loving father, mother, brothers and sisters.

(The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser, NSW – 18 July, 1922).

ROLL OF HONOR

SMITH – In loving memory of Corporal Bert Smith, who died of wounds, 18th July, 1917, in Harefield Hospital, England.

They live whom we call dead;
 Through darkness, pain and strife,
They followed where the Saviour led,
 And found eternal life.
And we who calmed their fears,
 And bade their sorrows end
Will also dry the mourner's tears,
 And be the mourner's friend.

Inserted by his loving father, mother, sisters and brothers.

(The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser, NSW – 20 July, 1923).

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)

St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England

St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield contains 126 Commonwealth War Graves.

During the two world wars, the United Kingdom became an island fortress used for training troops and launching land, sea and air operations around the globe. There are more than 170,000 Commonwealth war graves in the United Kingdom, many being those of servicemen and women killed on active service, or who later succumbed to wounds. Others died in training accidents, or because of sickness or disease. The graves, many of them privately owned and marked by private memorials, will be found in more than 12,000 cemeteries and churchyards.

Harefield (St. Mary) Churchyard contains war graves from both world wars. There are 120 First World War graves, mostly those of Australians who died in No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield Park. Uniquely, their graves are marked by scroll shaped headstones, chosen by the staff and patients at the hospital. In the centre of the Australian plot stands a memorial obelisk which was erected by Sir Francis Newdegate, late Governor of Tasmania and of Western Australia, and Mr. C.A.M. Billyard-Leake, of Harefield Park. The churchyard also contains six graves of the Second World War.

(Information from CWGC)



St Mary the Virgin Church, Harefield *(Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)*



St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield (Photos from CWGC)



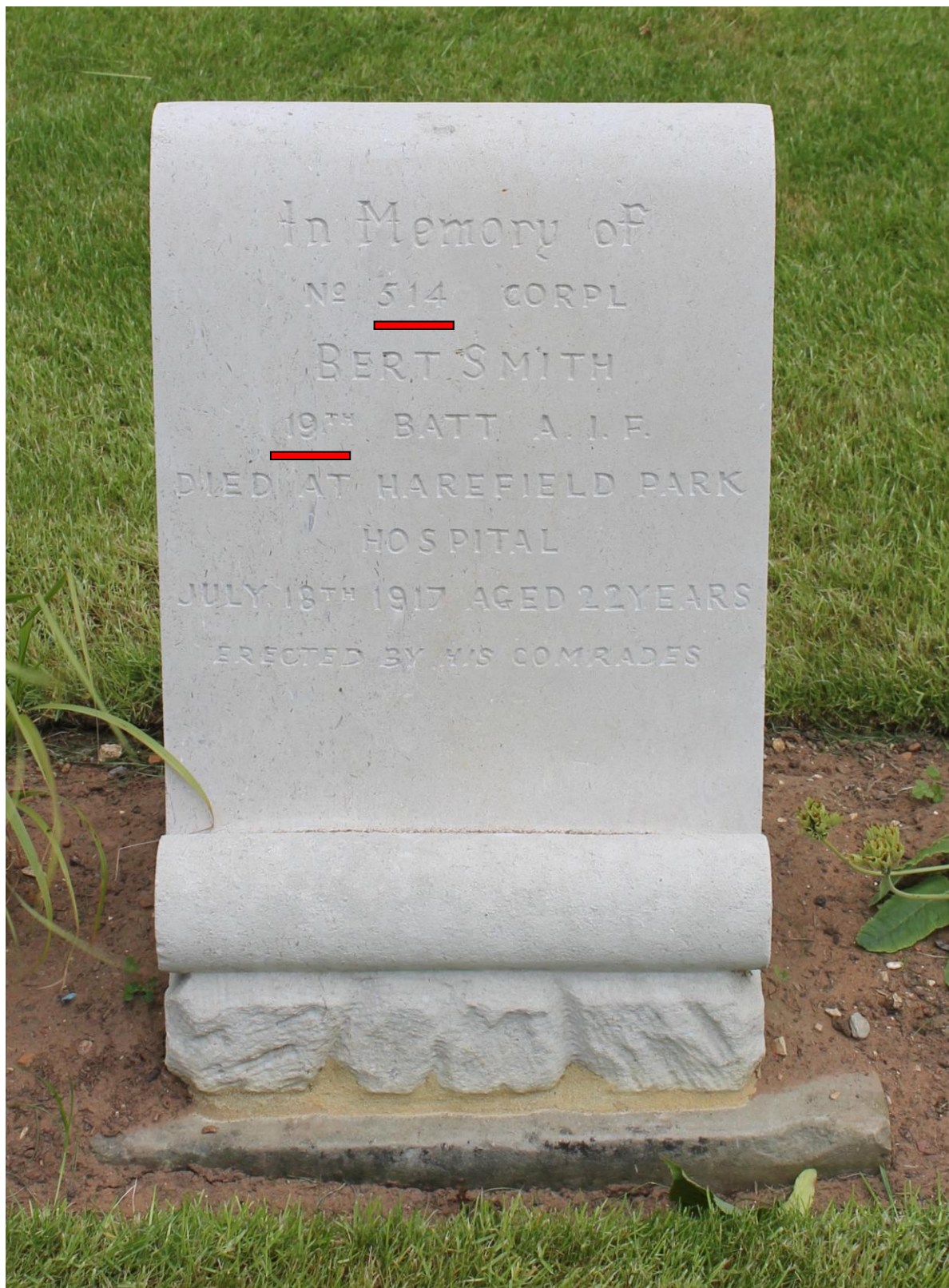


St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield



Photo of Corporal Bert Smith's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield, Middlesex, England.

[Note: CWGC were advised in July, 2020 (at the time of researching) that the Service & Battalion Numbers engraved on Corporal Bert Smith's headstone were incorrect.]

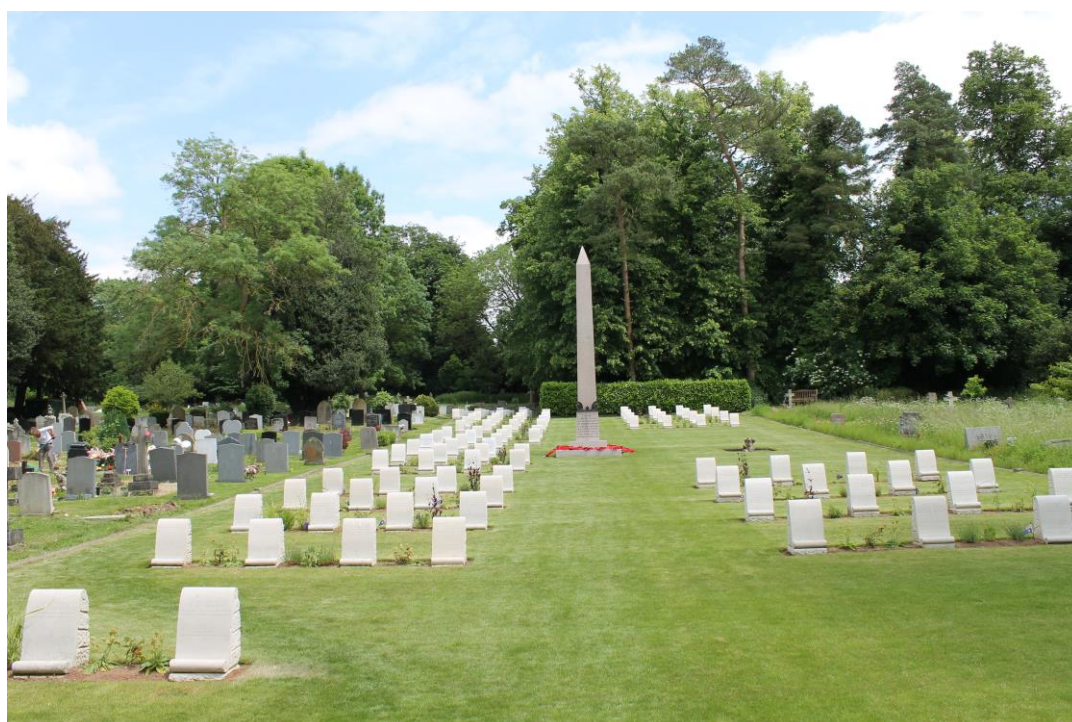


(Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)

UPDATE : The Commonwealth War Graves Commission responded to my email advising of the wrong Service Number & wrong Battalion Number. They advised that the Service number was corrected in 2016 & provided an updated photo & were recently advised of the Battalion number error which would be corrected in due course.



Updated Photo with corrected Service Number but wrong Battalion number for Corporal Bert Smith
(Photo provided by CWGC)



St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield *(Photo courtesy of Peter Bennett)*



St. Mary the Virgin Churchyard, Harefield (Photos courtesy of Peter Bennett)

