

**Brookwood Military Cemetery,  
Brookwood, Surrey, England**

**War Graves**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**5677 PRIVATE**

**R. E. SMITH**

**26TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**5TH SEPTEMBER, 1918 Age 31**

*Adieu Dear Lad*

*What Need Of Tears or Fears*

*For You*

## Rupert Espiner SMITH

Rupert Espiner Smith was born on 10th November, 1886 at Aitkenvale, Townsville, Queensland to parents John & Elizabeth Smith (nee Espiner).

The 1913 Australian Electoral Roll for the division of Herbert, subdivision of Ingham, Queensland recorded Rupert Espiner Smith, Sugar boiler from Macknade.

Rupert Espiner Smith was a 29 year old, single, Sugar-boiler from Cairns, Queensland when he enlisted on 8th April, 1916 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Church of England & his next of kin was listed as his father – Mr John Smith, Macknade, Herbert River, North Queensland. Rupert Smith stated on his Attestation Papers that he had been an Apprentice with C.S.R. Company for 3 years. According to information provided for the Roll of Honour by his grandfather, Mr John Smith – Rupert Smith had served with Herbert River Light Horse Infantry.

Private Rupert Espiner Smith was posted to 11th Depot Battalion on 17th April, 1916 for recruit training. He was transferred to 15th Reinforcements of 26th Battalion on 7th June, 1916.

Private Rupert Espingh (middle name as per Embarkation Roll) Smith, Service number 5677, embarked from Brisbane, Queensland on HMAT *Clan McGillivray (A46)* on 7th September, 1916 with the 7th Infantry Brigade, 26th Infantry Battalion, 15th Reinforcements & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 2nd 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.

Private Rupert Espiner Smith was marched in to 7th Training Battalion at Rollestone, Wiltshire on 21st November, 1916. He proceeded overseas to France via Folkestone on 13th December, 1916 on S.S. *Victoria*. Private Smith was marched in to 2nd Divisional Base Depot at Etaples France on 14th December, 1916. He proceeded from 2nd Divisional Base Depot on 17th December, 1916 to join his Unit & was taken on strength of 26th Battalion in France on 19th December, 1916.

Private Rupert Espiner Smith reported sick "to Hospital" on 24th December, 1916. (no other details listed).

Private Rupert Espiner Smith reported sick on 23rd March, 1917 & was admitted to 5th Australian Field Ambulance with Influenza. He was transferred to 2nd Divisional Rest Station on 23rd March, 1917. Private Smith was discharged to duty on 2nd April, 1917 & rejoined his Battalion on 4th April, 1917.

Private Rupert Espiner Smith was wounded in action in France on 3rd May, 1917. He was admitted to 5th Australian Field Ambulance on 3rd May, 1917 with shrapnel wound/s to Head then transferred the same day to 3rd Australian Casualty Clearing Station. Private Smith was transferred to Ambulance Train & admitted to 9th General Hospital at Rouen, France on 4th May, 1917 with G.S.W. (gunshot wound/s) to Head. He was transferred & admitted to 2nd Convalescent Depot at Rouen on 5th May, 1917 then transferred to 11th Convalescent Depot at Buchy on 11th May, 1917. Private Smith was medically classed "A" (fit for active service) on 12th June, 1917 & was admitted to 2nd A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Havre, France on 12th June, 1917. He proceeded from 2nd A.D.B.D. on 16th June, 1917 & rejoined 26th Battalion in France on 18th June, 1917.

### 26th Battalion

The 26th Battalion was raised at Enoggera, Queensland, in April 1915 from recruits enlisted in Queensland and Tasmania, and formed part of the 7th Brigade.....

After another stint in Egypt, the 7th Brigade proceeded to France as part of the 2nd Australian Division in March 1916 In concert with the 28th Battalion, the 26th mounted the first trench raid undertaken by Australian troops on the Western Front on 6 June. The Battalion fought in its first major battle around Pozieres between 28 July and 7 August. After a short spell in Belgium, the 2nd Division came south in October to attack again in the Somme Valley. The 26th Battalion took part in two attacks to the east of Flers, both of which floundered in mud and slush.

In early 1917, the 26th Battalion joined the follow-up of the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line and attacked at Warlencourt (1-2 March) and Lagincourt (26 March). For his valorous actions at Lagincourt, Captain Percy Cherry was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. On 3 May, the Battalion was also involved in the second attempt to breach the Hindenburg Line defences around Bullecourt. Later that year the focus of the AIF's operations switched to Belgium. There, the 26th battalion fought in the battle of Menin Road on 20 September, and participated in the capture of Broodseinde Ridge on 4 October.

*(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)*

### War Diary – 26th Battalion

*Vaulx – 3rd May, 1917:*

*The two Bn's relieved took part in the Hindenburg line attack on the morning of 3rd while the 26th's Bn's duty was to hold part of railway embankment from which the attack was launched (for full details see attached report & sketch). Later the 26th Bn was ordered into the attack to protect the right flank of the 6th Bde (see attached Report).*

*Later the same evening the 26th Bn was withdrawn to Longatte – Noreuil sunken road. Almost immediately on arrival the Bn "stood to" as the huns attempted to counter attack. Nothing came of this however & the Bn was engaged in digging during the remainder of the night (see Report).*

*(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)*

Mr J. Smith, Cordelia, Herbert River, Queensland, was advised by Base Records on 19th May, 1917 that Private Rupert Smith had been wounded. Mr Smith sent a Telegram to Base Records on 5th June, 1917 "*Please advise nature of private rupert espiner smith wounds number five six seven seven twentysixth battalion*".

Base Records replied to Mr John Smith on 5th June, 1917 regarding his telegram & advised: "*...I have to inform you the cable advice received here merely intimated that this soldier had been wounded, the nature of same and the name of the hospital to which he was admitted not being mentioned. It is not stated as being serious however, and in the absence of further particulars favorable progress is to be assumed, the practice of the overseas Authorities being to notify the Department should any change for the worse take place in a soldier's condition. Letters should be addressed as under and they will be forwarded wherever he may be located:- No. 5677 Private R. E. Smith, 26th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force, Abroad.*"

Mr J. Smith sent another Telegram on 16th June, 1917 "*Please advise nature of wounds Private Rupert Espiner Smith number five six seven seven.*"

Private Rupert Espiner Smith proceeded on English Leave from Belgium on 11th January, 1918 & rejoined 26th Battalion from Leave on 27th January, 1918.

Private Rupert Espiner Smith was wounded in action (2nd occasion) in France on 8th August, 1918. He was admitted to 6th Australian Field Ambulance with G.S.W. (gunshot wound/s) to Abdomen then transferred to 47th Casualty Clearing Station on 8th August, 1918. Private Smith was transferred to Ambulance Train on 9th August, 1918 & admitted to 3rd Australian General Hospital on 10th August, 1918. He was transferred to England on 16th August, 1918 on Hospital Ship with G.S.W to Back.

### **26th Battalion**

...Like most AIF battalions, the 26th fought to turn back the German spring offensive in April 1918, and in the lull that followed mounted "peaceful penetration" operations to snatch portions of the German front line. In one such operation in Monument Wood on 14 July the 26th Battalion captured the first German tank to fall into Allied hands - No. 506 "Mephisto". In another, on 17 July, Lieutenant Albert Borrella was awarded the Victoria Cross. Later in the year the 26th participated in the great offensive that began on 8 August, its most notable engagement being an attack east of Mont St Quentin on 2 September. The Battalion's last action of the war was the capture of Lormisset,

part of the operation to breach the Beaufort Line, on 3 October 1918. The 26th Battalion was disbanded in May 1919.

*(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)*

### War Diary – 26th Battalion

*8th August, 1918:*

*Battalion moved from its position in wood at 12.45 am. The night was very dark and cloudy and about 2.30 am a mist commenced to settle which by 3.45 am got very thick. At 3.30 am an enemy barrage came down and caused us casualties but the barrage died away towards zero hour. By zero hour the mist had got very dense indeed particularly caused by the smoke of the enemy barrage condensing the vapour. Our barrage opened with the tanks coming past the jumping off tape just as the bombardment opened. The mist was so thick that view for more than 5 or 6 yards was observed and generally thickened as the troops got into the area passed over by our barrage. Owing to the mixture of smoke and mist it was impossible to locate the barrage except by sound and co-operation with tanks was practically impossible. The tanks simply headed for any machine guns that they could hear and dealt with it as only tanks do.*

*All semblance of formation by the infantry was impossible from the start and companies became mixed and co-ordinated effort became very difficult. The majority of the enemy did not dispute our advance but got out. Isolated machine gun teams fought to the last but generally seemed to shoot rather high and except at close range did very little damage.*

*About half way between CARD COPSE and ST BASTILLE MILL the mist cleared somewhat and allowed of a formation being adopted to deal with any resistance. ST. BASTILLE MILL and the factory were rushed the latter with the assistance of a tank and prisoners were obtained in each place.*

*The objective was reached on time but owing to a certain number of guns firing short the Battalion had to dig in about 200<sup>x</sup> short of the objective which is in operation of this description was immaterial. The Battalion was in touch on both flanks. The Canadians on our right were a good way behind as for the most of the way but came ahead with a rush towards the end.....*

*Report on Operation by 26th Battalion A.I.F. on 8/8/18*

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*The estimated number of prisoners captured by the Battalion is 350. Receipts are held for 260 off and quite a number was sent down by escorts from other units. The number of enemy killed and wounded is unknown.*

*Our casualties were:-*

*KILLED ..... 2 Officers 23 other ranks*

*WOUNDED.....6 “ 109 “ “*

*MISSING .....- “ 3 “ “*

*TOTAL casualties 8 Officer and 135 other ranks.*

....

*(Extract of War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)*

Private Rupert Espiner Smith was admitted to War Hospital, Epsom, Surrey, England. He was reported to be dangerously ill on 20th August, 1918.

Base Records advised Mr J. Smith, Macknade, Herbert River, North Queensland, on 21st August, 1918 that Private R. E. Smith, had been wounded, second occasion. Mr J. Smith was advised on 4th September, 1918 by Base Records that Private Rupert Smith had been admitted on 20th August to the Horton County London War Hospital with gunshot wound to spine & was dangerously ill.

Private Rupert Espiner Smith, "D" Company, 26th Australian Imperial Force, died at 6.30 am on 5th September, 1918 at Horton (County of London) War Hospital, Epsom, Surrey, England from wounds received in action - G.S.W. (gunshot wound/s) of Spine (compound fracture Lumbar Vertebra) & Spinal Meningitis.

A death for Rupert E. Smith, aged 32, was registered in the September quarter, 1918 in the district of Epsom, Surrey, England.

Private Rupert Espiner Smith was buried at 1.30 pm on 10th September, 1918 in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England – Australian Military Burial Ground - Plot number 181, 474.

From the burial report of Private Rupert Espiner Smith - *Coffin was good. Polished Elm. The deceased soldier was accorded a Military funeral, Firing Party, Bugler and Pallbearers were supplied by Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London. The coffin was draped with the Australian Flag and surmounted by several beautiful wreaths, Chaplain the Rev. L. M. Gorrie, A.I.F. London officiated at the funeral, and the "Last Post" was sounded at the graveside. Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London were represented at the funeral.*

*Names of relative or friends present at the Funeral – (Brother) 3481A Pte G. H. E. Smith, 16th Bn, A.I.F. (Cousins) Miss M. Davies, 2 Cheshire View, Handbridge, Chester and W. E. Davies, same address.*

Base Records wrote to Mr J. Smith, Macknade, Herbert River, Nth Queensland on 17th April, 1923 stating that the site of his son's grave in Brookwood Military Cemetery had been officially registered as Plot 4 Row F Grave 13. *"While the actual place of burial remains unchanged the previous registration allotted thereto has been altered to conform with the uniform layout of this Cemetery."*

This is now recorded by CWGC as Memorial reference – IV. F. 13. Private R. E. Smith now has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Private Rupert Espiner Smith requested in his Will, dated 24th February, 1917, that *"in the event of my death I give the whole of my property and effects to Mrs Elizabeth Smith, Macknade, Herbert River, North Queensland, Australia."*

Protestant Alliance Friendly Society of Australia, Grand Lodge of Queensland, Kennedy Lodge No. 29 wrote to Base Records on 23rd September, 1918 with the following: *"re No. 5677, Private Rupert Espiner Smith, late 26th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force. Confirmation of the death of the above is required by this Lodge, as a claim has been lodged by his parents for Funeral Benefit. He is reported as having been shot in the spine, in France, thence carried to a London Hospital, where he expired. Date of death 4/9/18."*

Protestant Alliance Friendly Society of Australia, Grand Lodge of Queensland, Kennedy Lodge No. 29 wrote to Base Records on 7th April, 1919 with the following: *"re late, Private Rupert Espiner Smith, No. 5677, 26th Battalion, A.I.F. This soldier is reported to have died from wounds in a London Hospital on 5/9/18. I wrote you on 26/9/18 requesting a certificate of his death, and you promised to supply same as soon as the death was confirmed. Surely by this time his death ahs been confirmed, and I would be pleased to receive the certificate by return mail."*

Base Records replied to J. Popham. Esq, Secretary, P.A.F.S.O.A., Kennedy Lodge No. 29, Townsville, Queensland on 17th April, 1919 enclosing a certificate of report of death of the late No. 5677 Private Rupert Espiner Smith, 26th Battalion.

The Commonwealth Bank – Savings Bank Department, Brisbane, Queensland, wrote to Base Records on 30th July, 1926 requesting a Certificate of Death for Rupert Espiner Smith & also asked if there was a record of a Will to please forward a certified copy for their records.

Base Records replied to The Superintendent, Commonwealth Bank, Savings Bank Department, Brisbane, Queensland on 7th August, 1926 forwarded a certificate of report of death of the late No. 5677, Pte R. E. Smith, 26th Battalion. *"According to the records at this office the Will of the abovenamed deceased soldier was forwarded to the District Finance Officer, Brisbane."*

Elizabeth Smith, Macknade P.O., Herbert River, North Queensland wrote to the Australian Military Forces in February, 1921 with the following letter: *"I am informed you are issuing a Brochure titled where the Australian Rest. I should much appreciate your kindness of could send me one. My son Private Rupert Espiner Smith died of wounds received in the battle field of France Sep 5th 1918. His No 5677 26th Batt (buried Brookwood Cemetery Eng)."*

Base Records replied to Mrs E. Smith on 22nd February, 1921 advising *"... a brochure "Where the Australians Rest" will be forwarded, in the course of a week or two, to the father of the late No. 5677 Private R. E. Smith, 26th Battalion, he being the person entitled to receive, in keeping with the instructions governing the disposal of this and other items issuable on account of the services of a deceased soldier."*

John Smith, Macknade Post Office, Herbert River, North Queensland, wrote to Base Records on 1st April, 1921 with the following letter: *"I wish to thank you for your kindness in send me the Brochure entitled Where the Australian Rest. It is a beautiful gift which I prize very much. I wish to thank all that have been the means and expense of collecting the where abouts of our dear soldiers that made the supreme sacrifice it is a splendid book, good reading and good photo of the Cemeteries."*

Private Rupert Espiner Smith was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Smith's father – Mr J. Smith, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent July, 1921 & Plaque sent November, 1922).

John Smith, Macknade, wrote to Base Records on 30th November, 1922 with the following letter: *"Many thanks for the beautiful Plaque sent by you in honour off my dear son. I do appreciate it very much."*

John Smith, Macknade, Herbert River, North Queensland, wrote to Base Records on 19th April, 1923 : *"I am pleased to tell you I have received one Victory Medal. I wish to thank you for all the kindness you have done in connexion with my late son. I am glad to say I have already got a Pamphlet entitled "Graves of the Fallen" which I am proud to have."*

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Rupert Espiner Smith – service number 5677, aged 31, of 26th Battalion, Australian Infantry. He was the son of John & Elizabeth Smith, of Macknade, Herbert River, North Queensland.

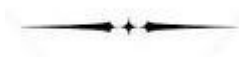
Private R. E. Smith is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 109.



*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

(68 pages of Private Rupert Espiner 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, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives*



## **Newspaper Notices**

### **OFFICIAL CASUALTY LIST**

The 305th list of Australian war casualties was issued yesterday....

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QUEENSLAND

WOUNDED

Pte Rupert Espiner Smith

*(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – 1 June, 1917)*

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### **Roll of Honour**

#### **Casualty List No. 428**

WOUNDED

R. E. Smith, Macknade, 2nd occ.

*(The Telegraph, Brisbane, Queensland – 10 September, 1918)*

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### **Wounded for the Third Time**

Mrs H. J. Young, of Saltwater Creek, has just received word that her brother, Private R. E. Smith, is an inmate of a London war hospital, suffering from a gunshot wound in the spine, and dangerously ill. This is the third time he has been wounded during his two years on active service.

*(Cairns Post, Queensland – 23 September, 1918)*

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### **LIST No. 436**

DIED OF WOUNDS

Rupert Espiner Smith, Macknade, 5/9/18 (prev. rep. w'ded)

*(The Queenslander, Brisbane, Queensland – 26 October, 1918)*

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### 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 R. E. Smith does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*Adieu Dear Lad*

*What Need Of Tears Or Fears For You*

### **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.



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)*





**Brookwood Military Cemetery** (Photo from CWGC)



**Brookwood Military Cemetery** (Photos by Magicfingers)



**Australian Graves in Brookwood Military Cemetery** (Photos by Magicfingers)





*(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher)*



**Australian War Graves** *(Photo courtesy of Neil Bright 2020)*

Photo of Private R. E. Smith's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England.



*(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher)*



(Photo courtesy of Ian Fletcher – Jan 2021)

