Vale Robert Wilkinson Hepworth

5th June 1898 - 11th August 1918

100 Years ago today, Robert Wilkinson Hepworth died at Le Hamel in the Somme Valley on the Western Front in France in WW1

Bob was my great-uncle, the brother of my grandfather.

All who knew Bob personally are long gone, but today we remember him.

Bob was just barely 20 years old when he died. He enlisted in the AIF three days before his 18th birthday. As he was under 21 he was not legally considered to be an adult, and so his father had to sign his enlistment papers on his behalf. He then served a little over two years

Bob was a Sapper in an engineering regiment, the equivalent of a Private in an infantry regiment. His job was to dig trenches, build bridges, repair roads, and do all the other similar tasks just behind the front lines. Hard, heavy, dangerous work: always exposed to enemy fire.

On August 8, 1918, Bob was repairing a road near Le Hamel. A German shell fell near him as worked, and he was seriously wounded. He died three days later on August 11.

Bob enlisted, served, and died so young that he never married. A whole branch of the family snuffed out before it started.

Tonight, on the centenary of his death, I will lay a wreath in memory of Uncle Bob, Robert Wilkinson Hepworth, at the Last Post ceremony at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

I will be carrying a pocket Bible - the one that Bob carried in France.

It carries an inscription from my grandparents, his brother and sister-in-law, that reads
> *"To Dear Bobbie*
> *with love from Tom and Mattie*
> *15.10.16."*

It also has a Bible quotation:
> *Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am your God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*
> *Isaiah 10-41*

Lest we forget

John Hepworth August 11, 2018