



Lieutenant Francis Leofric ARMSTRONG

[1880 – 1915]



15th Infantry Battalion

Francis Leofric Armstrong was born in Brisbane on 15 October 1880, the ninth of thirteen children to Octavius Charles Armstrong (grazier and magistrate) and Jessie Augusta Armstrong (nee Francis). Sadly, four of his siblings died in infancy and his parents died within days of each other in January 1917, less than two years after Frank's death.

He was educated at private schools including Brisbane Grammar School before serving in the Queensland Volunteer Rifles between 1896 and 1900, including one year as a private and six months as a lieutenant.

We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.

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Frank resigned from the Queensland Volunteer Rifles to go to South Africa to serve in the South African War (Boer War). It appears that he was not selected to be part of the Queensland contingent, but he was determined to serve and made own way to South Africa to enlist in a unit raised there, probably in Durban. He served initially in Prince of Wales Light Horse and then the 3rd NSW Imperial Bushmen, during which time he was promoted to corporal.

Corporal Armstrong was invalided home to Australia, arriving in Sydney on 25 June 1902. His service in South Africa in 1901 and 1902 was recognised by the Queen's South Africa Medal and four clasps (Cape Colony, Orange Free State, South Africa 1901, South Africa 1902).

Frank returned to Cape Town after the Boer War (possibly departing Sydney on *Damascus* on 3 October 1902) and was employed there by the Bank of Africa before his return to Australia in 1910. He was reported back in Queensland around 4 June 1910.

He worked with National Bank of Queensland at Laidley where he was involved community activities including fishing, local cricket, band, school of arts and chamber of commerce, and a military officers' association.

At the end of 1910 he was transferred to the bank's Head Office in Brisbane.

Armstrong re-joined the militia in 1910, serving in 7th Infantry (Moreton) Battalion until 1914, during which time he was appointed lieutenant on 12 October 1913.

Frank married Annie Endeavour Munro Mackay in Brisbane on 1 June 1914.

He volunteered for overseas service by enlisting in the AIF and on 9 October 1914 he was appointed 2nd Lieutenant, 15th Battalion which landed at Anzac late in the afternoon of 25 April 1915.

The unit's War Diary records on 16 July 1916 that Armstrong and thirteen others were mentioned in despatches *for work done* during the period 6 May to 28 June 1915. All were killed in action and inexplicably, but perhaps not unusually at the time, none of the 14 MIDs were gazetted.

On the night of 9/10 May 1915 the battalion attacked to seize the Turkish lines in front of Quinn's Post. Armstrong went forward to the centre of the assault party occupying part of the Turkish trenches when he heard that the commander of the centre assault party had been shot. The Australians were forced to withdraw as daylight broke on 10 May. Armstrong remained to the last and then ran with his sergeant back to the Australian lines across No Man's Land.

Frank Armstrong was the last of his party to reach Quinn's. He was acutely distressed for his men. *All my boys are killed or wounded out there*, he said, and at once endeavoured to climb out to see if any wounded remained. The men with him tried to pull him down but he struggled to the parapet and was killed. He was buried later that day at Lower Quinn's Post by Reverend Power.

Frank Armstrong was 33 years old when he was killed during the Gallipoli Campaign on 10 May 1915, a couple of weeks after the Landing. He was one of the 12 USC members killed in action at Gallipoli and the most junior of the four of those who were in 15th Battalion.

He never saw his three-month old baby son, Francis Mackay Armstrong, who was born on 22 February 1915. He now lies in Quinn's Post Cemetery, Anzac (Gallipoli).



Left: Lone Pine Plaque.



Right: Memorialised at Balmoral Cemetery Brisbane.

He is also memorialised on the grave of his wife's parents in Balmoral Cemetery, Brisbane:

*"In loving memory of his son-in-law Lieutenant Francis Leofric Armstrong
15th Battalion 4th Infantry Brigade
Australian Imperial Forces/Who fell in action
At Quinn's Post Gallipoli
on 9th May 1915
Aged 35 years."*

Gallipoli Sunday Turkey May 9th 1915

My dearest wife,
I am in an assaulting party against the Turkish Trenches tonight & have no time to write at any length. I am entrusting this message to Graham Wareham so if I do fall dear you will know my last thoughts are with you & our son. I hope you are spared for many years to come & that our son will turn out a good man. Forgive me for anything I have done in the past to hurt your feelings. Fondest love to dear Mrs Mackay & the boys & all our friends. Goodbye my dearest wife
Fondest love
Frank L Armstrong

This letter to Annie was recovered from the body of Lt. Graham Wareham, who was subsequently killed in action on 10 May 1915.
(Source: http://www.living-family-history.com/our_anzac_servicemen.html)

Above: Letter from Frank to his wife, Annie, written the night before he was killed.

Sources included:

- Australian War Memorial
- National Archives of Australia
- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports, and sundry documents.