



Captain Walter Aland LESLIE

[1887 – 1915]



3rd Field Artillery Brigade

Walter Aland Leslie was born in Hamilton Brisbane on 19 August 1887, fourth youngest of a family of (eventually) 15 children to Alexander Smith Leslie (saw-miller and draper) and his second wife, Martha Elizabeth Leslie (nee Aland). He and two of his brothers were killed in action in the Great War and another brother was later a Rhodes Scholar.

On 26 January 1901 Walter won a scholarship awarding free education at a grammar school. He attended Brisbane Grammar School 1901-1903 and served as a private in the School's cadets.

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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There is no record of his pre-war civilian employment, but he was a member of the militia as an officer in the Australian Field Artillery from 1909 until he joined the AIF in 1914. His service included postings to 3rd Field Battery (Fd Bty), 11th Fd Bty and 17th Fd Bty.

He joined the AIF soon after the declaration of war, was appointed lieutenant on 20 August 1914 and less than a month later was promoted captain and posted as a Battery Captain in 3 Field Artillery Brigade (3 FAB). Leslie was posted to 7th Field Battery along with other Queenslanders.



7th Battery, 3 Field Artillery Brigade on SS Rangatira en-route to Egypt. Capt Leslie is circled.

The Brigade trained in Egypt until early April 1915 when it left for Lemnos Island and sailed from there intending to land on 25 April. However, the brigade's War Diary records that four guns were disembarked the following day:

The three guns of 7th Battery¹ were on the right, near Bolton's Ridge and the battery was being fought each gun independently. Captain Leslie commanded No 1 Gun. The ground was such that the guns had to be deployed well forward. They were so close to the front line that they acted like giant shotguns, with devastating effect on the assaulting Turkish infantry.

By early May there were still no other positions for the other 3 FAB guns. The men of the other batteries were rotated through the Bolton Ridge positions to enable rest and to gain experience across all batteries.

On 5 May the enemy began heavy shell fire on Bolton's Ridge from a new battery that had not been located before.

The Official History states:

Captain Leslie and Lieutenant Ross, with two guns' crews of the 7th Battery, though completely exposed in their position in the firing line, gallantly turned their pieces against the hidden position from which the bombardment seemed to be coming and continued to fire until it ceased.

¹ Interestingly, the major commanding 7th Battery at this time was also a USC Member, Major Francis Augustus Hughes (later Lieutenant Colonel Francis Augustus Hughes DSO VD) and later President in 1920 and 1931 and Life Member 1937

Next morning the same guns opened again, shelling [our] batteries as well as the whole right of Anzac ... The Bolton's Ridge guns again answered this battery, but Leslie and Ross were unable to locate it definitely... Leslie was mortally wounded and died during the morning ...

Captain Leslie had been badly wounded by a shell and died of his wounds.

The records state that he was evacuated to the Hospital Ship A36 *Gloucester Castle*, died onboard on 6 May 1915, and was reported by the Captain as buried at sea.

But puzzlingly, the citation recommendation states he died while being removed to the ship, and he is recorded by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as buried in Shell Green Cemetery, Gallipoli.²

He had been recommended for decoration to recognise his earlier actions but for some reason, possibly connected to his Commanding Officer's absence after himself being wounded, the recommendation was deleted and never approved. A copy of his recommended citation was annotated by an unknown person somewhere 'in the system': *would have been recommended for DSO had he lived.*



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

² It is likely a memorial cross erected in the cemetery by his comrades was later mistaken for a headstone.