

## **‘The Indomitable’<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant Goodwin from Colwall’**

*Evan Evans, Lindisfarne, and Heather Armstrong, great niece of Willie Goodwin.*

The old adage is “give them an inch and they’ll take a mile”. This could have well been a motto for the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in the First World War, both with respect to their tendency to downplay the need for superfluous discipline (e.g. saluting officers), contrasted with their actions in the heat of battle. To this extent, the revered 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion chaplain, **Captain Joseph Booth** [MC, 1886-1885] stated that the battalion motto runs, *What We Have, We Hold*, and he proudly stated his belief that the *Battalion boast was that it had never lost an inch of territory which it once held.*<sup>1</sup>

Two exemplars of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion’s can-do spirit were **Lieutenant Francis Willie Goodwin**<sup>3</sup> [MC and Bar, MID, b1886, DOW 1917] (‘D’ Company) and **Captain Percy Lay** [MC, DCM, MM, Croix de Guerre, 1892-1955] (‘A’ Company mainly), the most decorated member of the distinguished 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Percy Lay is deservedly well known to many who are interested in the history and the feats of the AIF during WWI. A substantive part of this legend is underpinned by his humble and illustrative diary from the WWI period which properly resides at the Australian War Memorial for posterity.

‘Willie’ Goodwin (as he was known to his family, but in the AIF alternatively known as ‘Frank’ or ‘Bill’), is a more shadowy figure, in part due to running out of luck during the Third Battle of Ypres in October 1917. To further expand on Lieutenant Goodwin’s service, we have drafted the letters of fellow ‘D’ Company (mainly) officer, **Captain Gerald Evans** [MC, MID, b1889, DOW 1917].<sup>4</sup> We have of course, also enlisted assistance from the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion’s chronicler, Ron Austin<sup>1</sup> and the legendary Australian Great War historian CEW Bean<sup>5,6</sup> to tell Willie’s story.



**Lieut F Willie Goodwin**  
2/1917, MC & Bar, MID  
(DOW 4/10/17).



**Capt Percy Lay, on**  
26/10/1917, MC,  
DCM, MM & CdeG.



**Capt D Gerald Evans**  
c1916, MC & MID  
(DOW 20/9/17).



**Capt Joseph Booth**  
MC, 8<sup>th</sup> Bn Chaplain  
from January 1917.

### **Early life and family in Colwall, Herefordshire, till 1913**

**Francis William Goodwin** was the second youngest son, born in 1886 in Colwall, Herefordshire, of Edward (1844-1912) and Caroline (1846-1933) Goodwin. Willie had eight siblings: John Albert (1869-1944); Sarah (1871-1948); Edward (1873-1943); Thomas Alfred (1878-1962); Joseph Henry (1880-1952); Harry Bertram 1<sup>st</sup> (1882-1882/3, died of pneumonia); Harry Bertram 2<sup>nd</sup> (1885-1954, Heather Armstrong’s grandfather), and Archibald Frederick (1889-1963). Willie’s father, Edward, was a well-known local farmer and haulier, who used his horses to haul heavy loads up the Wyche cutting.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the first sharp right-angle bend heading up from the village to the Wyche is still known as Goodwin’s Corner [see postcard picture **next page**]. Edward died at the age of 68 in 1912.

Willie was clearly a gifted athlete, as verified by his membership of the Colwall Football Club in the c1903-04 season [see photo **next page**]. Willie’s brother, Harry, was also a proud member of this team. In the 1905-06 season the Colwall football team were the Hereford district champions, winning the Hereford, Burley Gate, Hereford Junior, Kingston Town and Hereford League Challenge Cups. Willie’s athletic abilities [see picture at the start line for a three-mile scratch race, **next page**] were noted upon a by a number of sources, and would have ensured that he was excellent material for being a soldier when he enlisted for the war in 1914 at Broadmeadows, Victoria. His love of sport would no doubt have endeared him to the sports-mad Australians, both during his pre-war time in Australia and at the frequent sports days after he joined the AIF. The Australians were renowned in WWI for their love of sport, particularly Australian Rules football, as attested

by one of Gerald Evan's former football team mates, **Capt Austin Mahony** MC, MID (24<sup>th</sup> Bn, b1891, DOW 9/10/18).<sup>8</sup>



*Postcard of Goodwin's corner with Malvern Hills in background and The Oaks family house, c 1912.*



*The Oaks house, Colwall, 2009.*



*Start line for a 3 mile scratch race, c1905, presumably in Herefordshire. Willie is 4<sup>th</sup> from the left.*



*The Colwall Football Club c1903-04. Willie Goodwin (centre half), & brother Harry (right half) indicated.*



*The Windmill Quarry, New Town, Nth Geelong, c1910.*

### **The shift to Australia**

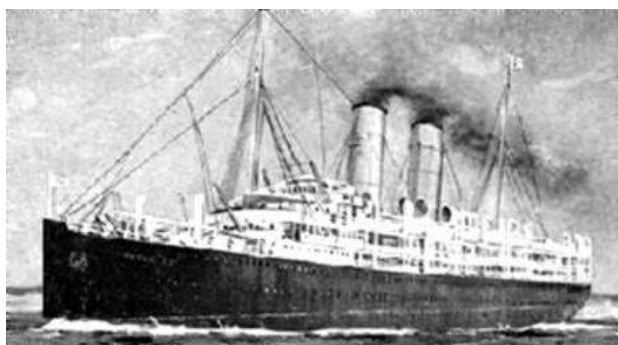
The death of Willie's father, Edward, seems to have initiated the itch under Willie's feet at the age of 26. Either that or he perhaps did not wish to continue to work on the family farm and in the haulage business, now under his older brothers' control. It is also possible his father's estate afforded him a small inheritance that gave him the money to travel. Willie departed on RMS *Osterley* from Southampton on 23 May 1913, bound for Adelaide, South Australia. Coincidentally, the rebadged HMAT *Osterley*, as a troop ship during WWI, was to take another 26 year old, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Gerald Evans, nearly two years later from Melbourne on 29 September, 1915, as part of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion reinforcements, landing in Egypt on 25 October, 1915. Gerald would eventually join Willie in 'D' Company of the 8<sup>th</sup> Bn, AIF in March 1916.



Once Willie arrived in Adelaide, he must have quickly travelled on to Geelong in Victoria. Living in the locality of Chilwell (Geelong North), Willie found work at John Windmill's quarry in nearby New Town. Working in a quarry with its danger, digging and regular explosions would, in retrospect, have been very suitable preparation for the war that was to come. Stone quarries (or chalk pits) would become familiar to the Diggers on battlefields such as Pozieres, Mouquet Farm and Dernancourt, as places of safety or danger. It would also appear from a letter to John Windmill from Willie in April 1917, that Willie was on very good terms with the owner as well as John's son, Josiah Windmill.<sup>9</sup> While in Chilwell it was noted that Willie was a *fine athlete, and put up some performances for the Christ Church Harriers*.<sup>10</sup>

Australian war correspondent **Keith Murdoch** wrote in Willie's obituary that:

*... prior to the outbreak of war [Willie] was the chief factor in forming a British Association Football team at North Geelong.*<sup>11</sup>



*HMAS 'Osterley' on which Willie Goodwin departed for Australia 23 May 1913.*



*HMAT 'Benalla' on which Pte Goodwin embarked for Egypt on 19 October 1914 (AWM PB0246).*

### Joining the AIF

Willie Goodwin's stay in Australia was, however, to be brief. Great Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, and Willie enlisted at Broadmeadows on 29 August 1914, five days after his mate, **Private/Driver Josiah Windmill** [John Windmill's son, 8<sup>th</sup> Bn then 58<sup>th</sup> Bn, 1890-1964, **below, third from left**], who had enlisted on 24 August.

Josiah's grandson (Jim Windmill) relates the family legend that Josiah and some of the quarry employees retired down to the local pub to work through the issues regarding the war and volunteering. Willie's enlistment was undoubtedly a combination of duty to the 'Mother Country,' sticking with his mates, and perhaps also a degree of home sickness for his family, particularly his mother, Caroline.



***Pte John Goodwin**  
King's Shropshire Light  
Infantry, 1869-1944.*



***Pte Joseph Goodwin**  
& wife, during WWI  
1880-1952.*



***Pte Josiah Windmill**  
8<sup>th</sup>/58<sup>th</sup> Bn, Driver,  
1890-1964.*



***Pte Edward 'Sosso' Lay,**  
'A' Coy, 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion,  
1890-1966.<sup>12</sup>*

On enlistment, Willie listed his mother as his next of kin and gave his religion as Church of England. He was recorded as being 5'9" (175cm) in height, 168lbs (74kg), with grey eyes, fair complexion and light coloured hair.<sup>13</sup> Initially, his rank was as a private with the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, however, he was quickly identified as having leadership potential and was promoted to lance corporal on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1914, the same day he sailed with the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion on HMAT *Benalla* **[top right]**.

In the Goodwin family, three of Willie's brothers in Britain also responded to the call to arms. **Archibald Goodwin** joined the Royal Field Artillery as a driver in the 189<sup>th</sup> Brigade [No. 156623, 8/1916 to 3/1919] and was promoted to lance corporal on 23/10/1917. **John Albert Goodwin** [Shropshire Regiment,

No. 20348, 1914-1920, **previous page, left**] enlisted, as did **Joseph Goodwin** [**previous page, second from left**]. Older brother **Thomas Goodwin** had previously served during the Boer War. All three of Willie's brothers survived the war, but details are scant, following the loss of 80% of the British WWI records in fires caused by the WWII Blitz.

### Egypt and Gallipoli: December 1914 to March 1916

Arriving in Egypt was to alight in another world again. In his diary, **Percy Lay**, Willie's 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion 'A' Company cobbler, recorded that their time in Egypt was a mixture of route marches, rifle drills and shooting practice, and taking in the sights. A bit of guard duty and defense of the Suez Canal was tossed in, along with medical inspections, church parades on Sundays, vaccinations and trench digging. There was time off for trips to the Pyramids, camel and donkey races and visits to the 'big smoke', Cairo.<sup>14</sup> A year later, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Gerald Evans was somewhat more expansive in his descriptions of what was as much hard work, as it was a wide-eyed-boys' own adventure, as he outlined in the following letters to his mother.<sup>2</sup>

- **26 Oct 1915:** *The trip from Suez was the most wonderful sight I have ever seen, right up the valley of the Nile & through the Irrigation Area ... The ploughs look about 2 000 years old & are drawn by two cows or bullocks that look like they come out of the old Bible pictures. The weather is pretty hot in the day & cool at night & the sand is the very devil to walk in.*
- **1 Nov 1915:** *The Melbourne Cup will be run on a Tuesday & I think they are going to have some kind of a sweep on it.*
- **7 Nov 1915:** *I am getting together quite a fluent vocabulary in Arabic & can swear with the best of them. Some of the ladies don't look bad over here but they have their faces half covered by a veil. Don't know what they are like after it is removed.*



*Map of ANZAC with Australian and Turkish forces on 19 May 1915, adapted from Lawriwsky.<sup>15</sup>  
Principle areas of operation by 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion indicated by place names with white dashed circling.*

On 8 April 1915, Willie, Percy and the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion boarded the *Clan McGillivray* in Alexandria, landing at Lemnos on Mudros Bay on 11 April. Preparations and training for Gallipoli continued for nearly two weeks before they left on the *Clan McGillivray* on 24 April for the April 25<sup>th</sup> Landing at Gallipoli, north of Gabe Tepe at Kum Kale, now known as Anzac Cove [see **above**].<sup>16,1</sup>

Lance Corporal Willie Goodwin's first taste of Gallipoli did not last long, as he received a gun-shot wound to his leg on the beach soon after landing. He was evacuated back to hospital in Heliopolis, near Cairo. Percy Lay was a bit more fortunate, with his diary post for the day making for very informative reading.

- **25 April 1915:** *Was a never to be forgotten morning as it was our first task of war. We landed in small boats but we could not get near the shore, so we jumped into the water, which was nearly up to our necks. Shells were busting all around us and the zip of bullets was like the sound of bees. After a pretty stiff fight we were obliged to entrench on the hills as our boys were getting knocked out all around us ... That night we had some pretty hot work as the Turks made attack after attack. There was a German officer who got into our lines and passed along the message "don't shoot your own patrol coming in" and they must have been right on us when we heard them singing out "Allah, Allah" and they got Allah but a different sort to what they expected and they turned and fled in all directions.*<sup>14</sup>

Willie's leg wound healed quickly and he boarded HMT *Australind* on 18 June 1915, to return to Gallipoli, where he rejoined the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, then in a reserve position in Shrapnel Gully.<sup>16</sup> From Lay's diary, the daily routine of being shelled, attacked, and attacking was typical, but most days were relatively quiet.<sup>14</sup> Increasingly, the casualties mounted, and sickness and disease (spread by hordes of flies) became a big problem (e.g. influenza, mumps, diarrhoea, enteric fever).

A one-week break from the trenches during the third week of July on Lemnos would have surely lifted the men's spirits. When the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion returned to Gallipoli on 19 July they resumed their old positions near Braund Hill, off Shrapnel Gully. After a couple of weeks in this locale, the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion moved into a front-line position at Steele's Post, which was to the right of Courtney's Post on the ridge [see map, **previous page**]. Here again the heat, flies, sickness (particularly dysentery) and heavier Turkish shell fire became a great concern. An added hardship was that fresh water was also in short supply.

This was to be Lance Corporal Willie Goodwin's time to shine, with his enthusiasm, general cheerfulness and fighting abilities. Combined with the attrition of officers and NCOs, these characteristics saw his rapid promotion to corporal (8/8/1915), sergeant (21/9/1915), CSM (acting, 21/9/1915 and CSM 20/11/1915) and RSM (acting, 11/12/1915).

Writing to his former employer, John Windmill, in Geelong (on 2 April 1917), Willie outlined his philosophy on life with respect to his war service:

- *I suppose the reason time flies so quickly for me is because I have no one depending on me during these terrible crises; consequences are, I can carry out my duties with a clear conscience, and without the slightest fear whatever.*<sup>9</sup>

Willie's good work and dedication to duty at Steele's Post was rewarded with the following recommendation for a bravery award:

***Recommendation for Military Medal, Sergeant (now RSM) Francis William GOODWIN:***

*For many weeks [5/8/1915 to 10/9/1915] when the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion held Steele's Post (then Corporal & afterwards Sergeant) RSM GOODWIN set a fine example to all ranks by his unselfish, uncomplaining & cheerful behavior, especially when the front trenches were heavily shelled. His devotion to duty & soldierly example I cannot too highly praise. (Awarded: Mention in Dispatches, 6/4/1916).*<sup>17</sup>

After a second stint on the Peninsula from 19 July to 10 September, an exhausted and ailing 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion was evacuated off Gallipoli for an extended break and convalescence on Lemnos (11 September to 20 November).<sup>16</sup> The rested and reinforced 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion returned again for the last time to Gallipoli on 22 November 1915. This time they moved into positions in Clarke Valley, near Shrapnel Green. In mid-December, the men started to hear whispers that the Anzacs would soon evacuate Gallipoli. **Percy Lay's** diary entries most likely summed up the feelings of many of the men.<sup>14</sup>

- **13 Dec 1915:** *Heard that we were likely to evacuate. Anger, but we would not believe it.*
- **15 Dec:** *Spent the day destroying picks and shovels, rum and explosives, it seems to be a shame ...*
- **18 Dec:** *Heard that we were to leave that evening and left things so that they would be no use to the Turks. Also blew up a few of our guns, left the trench at quarter past 5 and had a quick trip to the beach, Beachy Bill only firing three shots. A bit hard on us old chaps to have to leave so many of our old mates buried there.*

On 18 December 1915, the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion embarked on HMT *Ambassia*, with the last ANZAC troops leaving before dawn on 20 December. When departing Gallipoli, the Australians were torn between relief at leaving those God-forsaken hills, courtesy of an excellent tactical evacuation, and being distraught at leaving without completing the job, with their mates who gave their lives being left behind in silent graveyards.



## Egypt and the early days in France 1916

The 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion returned to Egypt from Lemnos early in 1916 to meet a fresh wave of reinforcements that included fresh new faces such as Gerald Evans to fill the empty spaces in the ranks. At Tel-el-Kebir, half of the Gallipoli veterans of the 8<sup>th</sup> were transferred to the newly formed 60<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Percy Lay's well-deserved promotion to corporal came through on 26 February 1916. Perhaps Percy had been spurning promotion to stay close to his older brother **Private Edward Lay** [1890-1966, picture on **right**, page 3], who was also in 'A' Company of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, and with whom he had joined the AIF.

On 26 March 1916, the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion embarked at Alexandria on HMT *Megantic*, bound for Marseilles and the Western Front. The run across the Mediterranean would have been more of a pleasure cruise if it was not for the erratic course mandated by the ever-present menace of German submarines.<sup>14</sup>

The contrast of France to Egypt and Gallipoli was stunning for the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion members, as can be seen in the following observations:

- *This is the prettiest port I have seen yet. We got in about 4 pm and passed the Notre Dame de Armeniers right up on a hill & as we came into the harbour, passed within 50 yards of the Chateau d'If where the Count of Monte Cristo was imprisoned ... Everything is beautifully green with the Spring just coming on and I am afraid La belle France knocks poor old Australia into a cocked hat for beauty. [Gerald Evans, 1 April 1916.]*<sup>4</sup>
- *1/2 April 1916: Got a good reception at all the stations along the track. Got within 12 miles of Paris and then bore away to the left. We were very disappointed. [Percy Lay.]*<sup>1</sup>
- *27 April: A visit by Sir Douglas Haig. Later it was communicated that Sir Douglas Haig was very pleased with the conduct and appearance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade – next day Half Holiday! [Percy Lay.]*<sup>1</sup>
- *On Tuesday last, the anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli, this Battalion held a sports meeting. My Company D was very successful; in the best section competition, our company got 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. My platoon was 2<sup>nd</sup>, beaten by 2 points. I ran the flag race and pulled in the tug of war. We were second in both of these. I was judge in the Anzac Sprint for men who were at the landing at Anzac. [Gerald Evans, 29 April 1916.]*<sup>4</sup>
- *Yesterday we came through some very pretty country. They are harvesting now; the women do most of the work & do it very well. Reapers & binders are very rare. Mostly reaping is done by hooks & scythes. One valley we passed through was surrounded by a low hill, they were harvesting right up the valley as well as hops & other green crops & hedges, there were about a dozen old windmills working around the hills & right on top was a very old Convent; been there since the flood. [Gerald Evans, 27 August 1916.]*<sup>4</sup>

A recent visit (Evans, September 2012) established that the French farmers still appear to be using some old-fashioned and labor-intensive agricultural practices, such as the sugar beet ricks, shown **below left**. Approaching Fromelles, signs of WWI are evident in the form of many substantial and sinister-looking blockhouses left standing in the fields.



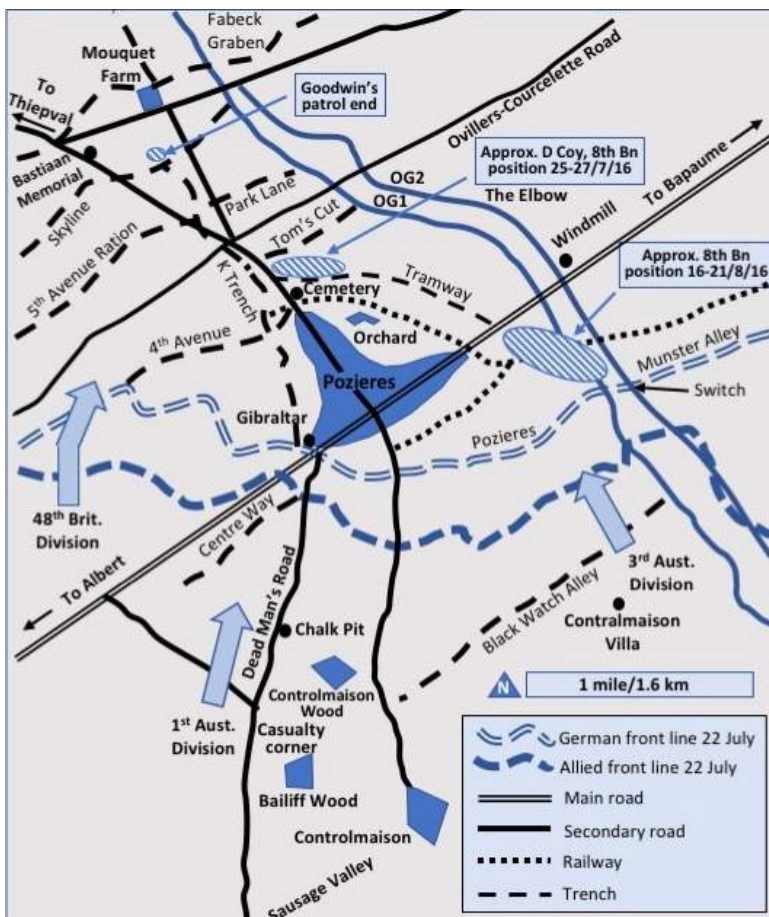
*Fromelles sugar beet ricks for drying the leaves for Winter fodder.*



*Abandoned blockhouses in a field near Fromelles, 9/2012.*

Percy Lay reported that the routine for April and May 1916 was largely made up of parades, route marches, learning how to use gas masks and rifle-firing practice, while the art of bomb throwing and use of rifle grenades was also covered. The 'old hands' like Willie and Percy would have been assisting the newcomers such as Gerald in army methods. Their first taste of trench warfare on the Western Front came in the Armentieres 'nursery sector', 15-30 May, and the 'warmer' Messines sector, just over the border in Belgium, 23 June to 4 July.<sup>16</sup> Percy Lay's diary and Gerald Evans' letters provide soldiers' impressions of the experience:

- *The men are looked after much better here than Gallipoli & we should have a fair time as they get plenty of spells from the trenches, but the shells are pretty big. We hear them all night & generally the troops are billeted in farm houses, barns etc and it is a great change from Egypt. Some of the girls are pretty & they have bonzer complexions but I like the Australian girls the best. [Gerald Evans, 13 April 1916.]*<sup>4</sup>
- *This is not a bad war if one can only dodge the few chances of getting cracked that are going. [Gerald Evans, 5 May 1916.]*<sup>4</sup>
- *There is plenty of grass about these trenches but it would be risky for running cows in. You see very little signs of the enemy. I had a couple of shots at one yesterday morning but think I missed him. I was very proud of shooting down one of their wind gauges. We have a great assortment of these as the gas question depends on the wind, of course. [Gerald Evans, 23 May 1916.]*<sup>4</sup>



Map of Pozieres battlefield between 22<sup>nd</sup> July and 5<sup>th</sup> September, 1916, based on tracing from Bennet 'Pozieres'.<sup>18</sup>

- *27 May 1916: Lt Luke Fay and myself went out to see if we could get to the enemy trenches but got stopped by his barbwire. Discovered a party of enemy out in front. [Percy Lay.]*<sup>1</sup>
- *The work is fairly strenuous here but they take us out for a spell when we have been here for a while, so it is very different to Gallipoli where they had to stay in the trenches for months on end on bad food, the food is good here. [Gerald Evans, 17 May 1916.]*<sup>4</sup>
- *26 June 1916: That night three of the men got wounded out on my post. I seem to be very lucky as I was between the three of them and did not get touched. [Percy Lay.]*<sup>1</sup>
- *3 July 1916: Fritz put a shell over amongst a two-up school & killed two & wounded six others. [Percy Lay.]*<sup>1</sup>

Unknown to the men of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the real storm clouds were gathering further south on the Somme. The impending battle would test the mettle of the Australians and bring in a new and merciless definition for the brutality of modern warfare.

### Pozieres: July to September 1916 (Pozieres Cemetery, The Windmill and Monquet Farm)

Australian war correspondent and official historian, Charles Bean, accurately wrote that *Pozieres Ridge marked a site more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth*. This was the cauldron into which three AIF divisions would be fed, including the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, initially for supply fatigues in Sausage Valley (23-24 July 1916), then into the front line (25-27 July, 1916) on the 'left' side of Pozieres [see map above]. The initial disposition of the jaunty Australians was to show the 'Tommies', and most of all the Germans, the stuff they were made of, particularly after the unedifying stalemate of Gallipoli.

The fighting was so intense and brutal at Pozieres that even Corporal Percy Lay was quite muted in his description about it in his diary. Percy was in 'A' Company, commanded by **Lieutenant Luke Fay** [MC, b1884, RTA], who was soon replaced by the adjutant, **Captain Gus Lodge** [DSO, 1885-1949]<sup>19</sup> when Fay was wounded during a push through the village towards the Orchard and Tramway [see **previous map**]. This assault dislodged a large number of German soldiers from their strong posts, who then retreated back towards the cemetery, to where **Captain James Hurrey** [MID, 1884-1965] and 'D' Company had remorselessly fought their way forward.



**Capt Austin Mahony**  
MC, MID, 24<sup>th</sup> Bn,  
DOW 9/10/18.<sup>8</sup>



**Capt Luke Fay MC**  
8<sup>th</sup> Bn, 1884 – RTA.  
NAA A14290:88.



**Capt Augustin B Lodge**  
DSO, 8<sup>th</sup> Bn, 1865-1949.  
AWM H06208.



**Capt James Hurrey MID,**  
8<sup>th</sup> Bn, 1884-1965.

In a letter written from Melbourne after Captain Gerald Evans' death (on 20/9/1917), and freed from the strictures of censorship, Captain James Hurrey gave the clearest outline of the fighting on that day:

- 'D' Coy, 8<sup>th</sup> Bn, completed the capture of Pozieres. We took 3 M[achine] guns and 59 prisoners. We were 600 yds in advance of the furthest strong point and 1,000 yds in advance of our line. We followed our own barrage so closely that we got to between the German strong points unseen, and into K Trench before the Bosche had chance to use his M guns. The attack took place just before day-break, and when day broke we saw 1,000 Boschies between us and our line [driven towards them by 'A' Company]. Our fire decimated them. Jerry used one of their own M guns, and as my orders were no prisoners on account of our isolated position, the 59 men we took actually got through the fire to us. [James Hurrey, writing 28/9/1917.]<sup>4</sup>

Others also wrote of the events of 25 July:

- I am trying hard to write something but it is hard with the censor to contend with, you will probably know all about our stunt before this as they are sure to write it up a lot in the Australian papers. Our battalion has done remarkably & my company did the 'star' turn of that particular party and got the furthest ahead ... [Gerald Evans' letters: 31/7 and 2/8/1916.]<sup>4,20</sup>
- 25 July 1916: Our battalion got pretty badly smashed up but had gained all our objectives and was hanging on to them like grim death. [Percy Lay.]<sup>14</sup>
- Commanding officer of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, **Col. Coulter** [DSO, MID, 1879-1960] described the advance by D Coy to be an 'irresistible advance' that reached its objective by 5 am, having captured seven MGs and then commenced to dig-in some 50m beyond the Pozieres Cemetery. [Ron Austin.]<sup>1</sup>

The concentration of shellfire at Pozieres is the stuff of legend. Two comments by Percy Lay and Gerald Evans succinctly described the shelling:

- July 26 1916: Fritz shelled the hell into us, in fact we could see the shells falling, they were that thick. [Percy Lay.]<sup>14</sup>
  - The shell fire passes all imagination. [Gerald Evans, 31/8/1916.]<sup>20</sup>
- Finally, perhaps Scott Bennett best summed up the situation, as such:
- Later the Australian soldiers referenced the intensity of shellfire in terms of the question, 'better than or as bad as Pozieres?' At that time and by definition, shellfire could not possibly be worse than that experienced at Pozieres.<sup>18</sup>



Not content with only taking the Pozieres trenches, the *indomitable*<sup>1</sup> RSM Willie Goodwin, led a small patrol along K Trench towards Mouquet Farm for almost a mile, probably to the point where it intersects Skyline Trench [see **previous map**]:

- *Finding the trench unoccupied, Goodwin and his men finally approached to within 100 yards of the ruined walls of Mouquet Farm [probably about in the area circled in the photo below left]. Although Goodwin's patrol only encountered one German soldier, who was immediately shot, Goodwin's patrol observed many enemy soldiers moving along the trenches towards the Windmill, in what appeared to be the preparation for a counter-attack. This important observation was transmitted to the Allied artillery, who quickly brought down a barrage upon the enemy trenches.*<sup>18</sup>
- *So far the heads would not believe we were there. I am hoping the boys will get some ribbons out of it, they certainly deserve them – they are wonderful! [Gerald Evans' letter 2/8/1916]*<sup>20</sup>



Looking towards Mouquet Farm from Ross Bastiaan's plaque on Pozieres-Thiepval Road, 11/1998. White dashed circle indicates the likely furthest extent of RSM Goodwin's patrol on the 26/7/1916.



Heavy shell damage to Pozieres Cemetery 10/1916. 'D' Coy of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion took and held positions around 50 yards beyond this point on 25-26/7/1916.

Charles Bean, in his interview notes with Willie after the Mouquet Farm 'excursion', was certainly convinced that Goodwin's patrol had audaciously nearly reached Mouquet Farm. It was the British 48<sup>th</sup> Division, whose front Mouquet Farm was on, that would not believe the report. On Willie's part, he regretted having not occupied the trench, but he did not have the manpower or logistical support to do this, at least not on his own.<sup>5</sup> The regret was well founded, as it would take a couple of months and countless lives for the Allies to eventually take Mouquet Farm.

After the remnants of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion tramped down the hill away from the front line and Pozieres towards Fricourt, a friend of Gerald's, **Sergeant TWC 'Bill' Usherwood** [23<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, b1891] observed the condition of the battalion and was one of the first to speak to Gerald. His perceptive observations were as follows:

- *As I said before he [Gerald] had just come out of the warmest corner in this part of the globe, and consequently was somewhat dirty & unshaven and a bit ragged and he hadn't had a sleep for several days. Do you realise what that means? In case you don't fully, I'll give you an idea in a few words. It means that he has been with his men playing a big part in the biggest game being played in the world today, with the result that his company took & held the most advanced position we hold in our line today and the fact that I saw him tired & dirty is clear proof that he wasn't only showing his man how to play the game but was helping them to play it and it takes a man to do that ... [Letter to Gerald's brother, Evan, 27/7/1916. **Sgt Usherwood** went MIA one week later at Pozieres, 4/8/1916.]*

After Pozieres, RSM Willie Goodwin was recommended for a DCM but this was translated into the awarding of a Military Cross following his promotion to 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant:

**Recommended for DCM, then amended to MC: RSM Willie Goodwin**

*During the action at Pozieres 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> July 1916, RSM Goodwin performed most gallant work. When the 8<sup>th</sup> Bn attack had reached its objective, he took a patrol forward to Mouquet Farm and brought back valuable information. He personally supervised the supply of rations, water and ammunition to the front line, himself assisting in the carrying. He assisted in the removal of wounded and worked unceasingly and gallantly for 3 days without sleep or rest. This was done under intense*

*fire which hardly ever ceased. His example of heroism had an inspiring affect on the men. Signed HBW [Walker], Major General.*<sup>17</sup>

Congratulating Willie on being awarded the Military Cross, **General William Birdwood** wrote:

*Dear Goodwin, I am writing a line to congratulate you most heartily upon the Military Cross, which I am so delighted has been awarded to you for your gallant work during the action at Pozieres between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and the 27<sup>th</sup> of last month. I well know how your Battalion reached its objective in the attack, you took a patrol forward to Mouquet Farm, and brought back valuable information ... and most gallantly for three days and nights, without rest, assisting in the removal of the wounded, and this too you did under intense fire ... The example you set had, I know, a most inspiring effect on the men, and I must thank you for it most heartily. I sincerely trust that you may be spared to see through to a finish with us and with good wishes. – Yours sincerely, WR Birdwood.*<sup>9</sup>

Willie was also recommended for a further award based on his first Pozieres stunt:

**Recommendation: Russian Cross of St George, 1<sup>st</sup> Class** (not awarded)

*RSM (now 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut) Francis William GOODWIN: Of all officers and men who did valuable work and displayed heroism before and during the attack on POZIERES from 25/7/16 to 27/7/16, none could reach the standard of this WO [warrant officer]. As soon as our attack had reached its objective, he went forward with a patrol towards MOUQUET FARM and brought back valuable information. He personally saw that rations, water and ammunition were taken to the front line, assisting in the carrying, he assisted and supervised the removal of wounded and for 5 days and nights without sleep did tremendous work under fire of terrific intensity and which hardly ever ceased. It is hard to express in words what this man did, but it was valuable, heroic and self-sacrificing and I'm sure no honour is too great for him. It would almost be impossible for any man not to rise to great height with such an example as WO GOODWIN to follow.*

Pozieres, through both severe attrition and its intensive testing of men under sustained enemy fire, identified a new cohort of leaders for the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Accordingly, Willie was promoted to 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant (5 August 1916), Percy Lay to sergeant (30 July, 1916) and Gerald Evans to lieutenant (27 July, 1916).

The time between the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion's first and second front-line duty at Pozieres was very much the calm in the eye of the storm. After some well-deserved rest, an influx of reinforcements and some reorganisation, Gerald Evans in a letter commented to his brother Evan:

- *We have had an 'easy off' the last few days & the boys are celebrating it in great style; they deserve it too, if anyone says anything to the detriment of the Australian Soldier, give him one for me – [3/8/1916].*<sup>4</sup>
- *I have been having quite a decent time lately; we have had a fair march but lately have been just doing ordinary drill which is quite a relief after the very strenuous time we have had. [11/8/1916].*<sup>4</sup>
- **10<sup>th</sup> Aug:** *Inspection by the King. We all lined up on the road and The King and General Birdwood drove slowly through in a motor. Afterwards General Birdwood inspected our brigade and gave them great praise for the work at Pozieres. [Percy Lay]*<sup>14</sup>

Integrating the newly arrived reinforcements into the battalion required an intense period of training, route marches, parades and lectures. The 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion was then ready to go back into the front line at Pozieres, between 16-21 August 1916.

Their second Pozieres stint, in the area between the Tramway and Munster Alley (in front of The Windmill), would not be as successful as the first. Although the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion's attack was just as fierce as in July, they were unable to establish a foothold due to tenacious German defence. One of the last to be dislodged from the German trenches was Percy Lay, who, in his diary afterwards, described the action:

- **18 August 1916:** *Early in the morning we went up to the line as we were to hop over same night. Went over and my party was on the right and did good work and had the Germans beaten, when our left retired and after all our bombs had been thrown we had to go back also, but not before I had the satisfaction of getting four Huns with one bomb. After we got back to our trench, we reorganised for another attack, but this time they were ready for us and we got hell, so we could not get nearer than twenty yards to his trenches, and we had to fall back one again. After a few minutes spell, Capt Lodge came along and said would have another go at them. I went out with him for the third time and it was hotter than ever as Fritz had got his supports up. Capt Lodge got wounded alongside of me as we were going back. Hard work alright getting our wounded and trying to find our **Capt, Dudley Hardy** [b1894, MIA 18/8/1916], but a shell must have blown him to pieces after he was wounded.*<sup>14</sup>

- **19 August 1916:** *We had dug in two hundred yds ahead of our old front line and this saved our lives as they shelled just behind us unmercifully and at other times dropped some in our trenches. Had great sniping as the Huns crept in front to shell holes. A lot of our chaps went out with Shell Shock – our officers and some of the men got relieved.*<sup>14</sup>
- **21 August 1916:** *Found out that out of 24 in my Platoon that went over with the 1<sup>st</sup> wave there was only five of us left, 3 killed, 3 missing and 13 wounded.*<sup>14</sup>

After this stunt at Pozieres, Gerald Evans made the following comments in letters home:

- *The stretcher-bearers over here are wonderful, the work they do. [August 1916]*<sup>4</sup>
- *I have a horse to ride up the march now being a Company Commander. Ahem? It is better than walking. I have got a bit tired of walking, it will be hard if I have to go back to it again, as I probably will if the other officers come back. [28/8/1916]*<sup>4</sup>

Willie Goodwin's contributions to the battalion's efforts are most appropriately outlined by his citation for a second Military Cross, and the congratulatory note from General Birdwood:

***Recommendation originally for a VC then amended to Bar to MC: 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut Willie Goodwin***

*At Pozieres, France on the night of 18<sup>th</sup> August 1916 after the third attack on enemy trench between MUNSTER ALLEY and TRAMLINE, our line had fallen back on its original trench, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut GOODWIN brought in a badly wounded man and then returned to assist others. Whilst dressing a wounded man, a shell burst, killing this man and knocking GOODWIN out for half an hour, in spite of this when he came to his senses he brought in two others. All this time the enemy kept up constant fire from machine guns and artillery. On the next day, 19<sup>th</sup>, he observed one of our men, No. 3493, Pte GR GROVE, lying wounded close to the enemy parapet, and at night accompanied by Lieut MUMMERY went to the spot which was within 8 yards of the enemy trench. Lieut MUMMERY placed the man on GOODWIN's back and they started off but were observed by the enemy who poured in a rain of bullets. However, both officers brought the man across 150 yards of space between the trenches which was swept by machine gun and artillery fire. In addition, this officer did invaluable work in supervising the rationing of the men in the front line and getting wounded men down to the Dressing Station.*

**General Birdwood** wrote (in part): *1<sup>st</sup> ANZAC Corps, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1916. Dear Goodwin, – this is a line to congratulate you very heartily on the really high distinction which you have just won in being awarded a Bar to your Military Cross, one of the first to be gained by our troops, and I should much wish it had been even a higher award to come your way ... Thank you so much for the fine example which you showed, and to which we look to ensure complete victory ... Your sincerely, WR Birdwood.*<sup>9</sup>



**Capt Dudley Hardy**  
b1894, MIA 18/8/1916  
8<sup>th</sup> Bn, AWM C01197.



**Lt Clarence 'Tas' Mummery**  
MC & Bar, 8<sup>th</sup> Bn,  
b1894, KIA 20/10/17.



**Pte George Grove**  
8<sup>th</sup> Bn, 1889-1972.

**Lieutenant Clarence 'Tas' Mummery** [MC & Bar, MID, b1894, KIA 20/10/1917] was deservedly awarded his first MC for his part in this action. Interestingly, **Private George R Grove** [1897-1972] survived the war, returning to Australia in July 1917. Willie notes in his diary meeting Private Groves in London for tea on Sunday, 1 July 1917, so Willie and Tas' efforts were fully rewarded. The wound George Grove received at Pozieres was to his mid-thigh. This subsequently became infected and his right leg was amputated two weeks later. George's octogenarian nephew, Norm Grove, informed me (Evan) that George largely had a good



life, working at the BP office building in Melbourne, and proudly being independent of the invalid veteran's pension.

George is reputed to have carried an inspirational letter from a captain in the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion on his person for all his post-war years. That letter was most probably from Captain James Hurrey, his company commander at Pozieres. The loss of his leg was cheerfully overcome by George with the use of a wooden leg and crutches. Norm fondly remembers fishing trips by boat in Port Phillip Bay and the Gippsland Lakes with George, who was his favorite uncle. In a boat, George was very nimble and shunned assistance.

### **The Zillebeke raid at Ypres and Goodwin's Post, September 30 to 23 November 1916**

After the rigours of Pozieres and a spell out of the line, the men of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion were no doubt pleased to move back north towards Flanders in the Hazebrouck-Poperinge area.<sup>16</sup> Marching through the countryside on route marches in the pleasant autumnal weather brought visions of a gentler kind. Gerald Evans in a letter home noted:

- *Have you got many sheep to shear? It is dead funny to see them shearing here, they round them up in the paddock, stick a couple of hurdles round them & get busy, most of them will eat out of your hand!* [28/8/1916]<sup>4</sup>
- *Reapers and binders are very scarce, but one day during a march we halted near where one was working & one of the boys did a couple of rounds on the binder to keep his hand in. He looked a treat going around with his pack on. [28/8/1916, to mother].<sup>4</sup> Battalion near Hazebrock [sic] at this time.<sup>16</sup>*

The 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion then spent two weeks on the front line near Ypres, presumably around the Zillebeke area:

- **10<sup>th</sup> September:** *General Walker and Brigadier came up through the trenches and that evening when we were out on patrol we heard Fritz having a musical evening in one of his dugouts. [Percy Lay].<sup>14</sup>*

A special raiding party was sanctioned by **Major General HB Walker** [KCMG, KCB, CB, MID, British, 1862-1934] under the command of **Colonel Gordon Bennett** [CO 6<sup>th</sup> Bn, CB, CMG, DSO, MID, 1887-1962]. The participants selected were a group of up and coming junior officers in the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion including Capt Hurrey, Lieut Evans, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut Joynt, Lieut Maguire and Bombing Officer Lieut Goodwin.

The aim was to find out how far the front of the German division opposite extended and its strength. The area for the raid selected was east of Ypres, beyond Glasgow Post and north east of The Bluff, which was held by the 73<sup>rd</sup> Landwehr Regiment. This area was characterised by well-developed trenches and almost impenetrable barbed wire. The team practised the raiding tactics for ten days before the raid. During that time, Captain Hurrey unfortunately became sick once again (chronic bronchitis) and the command of the raiding party passed to Lieut Gerald Evans. A first-hand summary of the raid can be drawn by referring to the second of Lieutenant Joynt's war memoirs.<sup>21</sup>

- *The raid was organized in two parties, one under Lt Joynt, the other under Lt John Maguire who crossed No-man's land in different places. The experienced **RSM George Harris** [DCM, 1885-1960] was also with Joynt's group. Each party carried with them a 'canvas mat type of ladder that rolled up into a bundle ... and was thrown over tall barbed wire, which was about ten feet high and ten feet wide'. First over was #1 bayonet, then #2 bayonet, #4 was a bomb thrower, #6 was Joynt, then #7, #8 reserved bomb throwers and #9, #10 were bayonet men. Enemy trench only 60 yards away. Another 20 men followed to take up position on enemy parapet to give cover on withdrawal. Raid had to be done very quietly or otherwise the raiding party was in a very vulnerable position, so blackened faces and balaclava helmets were used for complete camouflage. A hidden barb trip wire was unexpectedly found which slowed progress, so RSM Harris sped up the party. The canvas ladder worked perfectly and at 10 pm artillery opened fire with box barrages to isolate and protect the attacking sections. Once Joynt's party got into German trench they almost immediately got a German prisoner who surrendered. Bombers rushed towards the German HQ and a bomb fight ensued. Joynt was wounded in the shoulder by a German grenade which landed near him. A number of Germans were also reported killed or wounded. The Germans then retreated to their bunkers with a few grenades thrown after them for good measure.*
- *Upon preparations for withdrawal, a wounded man was found [Pte **Robert Smith**, b1886, DOW 2/10/16], who was quickly returned to Australian lines. Another OR was also slightly wounded. Joynt was one of the last out and had difficulty getting out of the deep trenches and a trip wire caused a problem that ended up tripping him into some barb wire where he was hung up about half way in No-*

*man's land. Two men came out to get him off, Col. Bennett and his orderly, and they just got in before fire fight started.*

The rescue of Lieutenant Joynt was just as well, because he later played a major role in the Somme, and received a VC for *most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty during the attack on Herleville Wood, near Chuignes, Peronne, on 23 August, 1918.*<sup>22</sup>



**Lt Col Graham Coulter**  
DSO, MID, returned.  
CO 1916-1917.<sup>1</sup>



**Capt Donovan Joynt**  
(later major) VC, MID  
8<sup>th</sup> Bn, 1889-1986.



**Col H Gordon Bennett**  
by James Quinn, 1919.  
6<sup>th</sup> Bn, AWM ART03343.



**Major Gen Harold B Walker**  
by James Quinn, 1918.  
AWM, ART03349.

Congratulations from Army Corps were given, with Lieutenants Evans, Goodwin, Joynt and McGuire and CSM Harris getting special mentions and MID recommendations (only Evans and Joynt were eventually gazetted). The other men who participated with distinction were **Corporal Edward Gunn** [MM, 1895-1952], and **Privates David Etherton** [MM, 1889-1966] and **Archibald Smith** [MM, MID, b1880-RTA]. Gerald wrote to his mother on 10 October 1916:

- *There was a little matter of a raid that I happened to be in charge of, and I did not feel inclined to write till it was over; however, it went off very successfully, and now can tell you all about it, it was very well done, & they have all said very nice things about me, and what you will probably like much better, I will not feel it is my turn to take part in a raid for a long time to come ... Captain Hurrey who was in the same Company as I for a long time has gone to England sick, he was always very decent to me.*<sup>4</sup>

This was the end of the war for Hurrey, as he had a series of ailments – rheumatic fever, dysentery, bronchitis – starting at Gallipoli till he was finally invalided in June 1917 [refer to NAA service record].

After another stint in the line from 9-14 October 1916, at Glasgow Post just south of Zillebeke, the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion returned to the Somme. The 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion went into the trenches at Flers/Gueudecourt from 4-10 November 1916.

The battalion war diary reported that this stay in the trenches were *very, very wet* and that the men moved back to Bernafay Camp after being relieved by the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion: *Men very much exhausted.*<sup>16</sup>

- *My dear Mother – Since writing to you I have returned to the battalion from leave; it has been raining a good deal here so things are not very cheerful but suppose I will soon settle down again soon.* [Gerald Evans, 29/10/16]<sup>4</sup>
- *2<sup>nd</sup> Nov: Moved out of camp in afternoon and had a muddy trip up to the reserve trench and it had mud up to our knees. Spent night trying to make some sort of dry spot to sit down in.* [Percy Lay.]<sup>14</sup>
- *6<sup>th</sup> Nov: Came on to rain like the very devil, most of us had to sleep standing up and we were also up to our hocks in mud. A lot of our chaps going to hospital with colds and bad feet.* [Percy Lay.]<sup>14</sup>
- *8<sup>th</sup> Nov: The boys were in a terrible mess after their job of the night before, mud up to their waists and wet to the skin. A terrible lot went to the hospital.* [Percy Lay.]<sup>14</sup>
- *We had snow yesterday and the boys were looking a bit tucked up; don't know how they will stand the Winter here ... We are having a bit of a spell now and it is very acceptable, the weather conditions are worse than the Germans and the mud is indescribable, though I have heard some excellent attempts at describing it from the men.* [Gerald Evans, 19/11/16.]<sup>4</sup>

Overall, the reports from Percy and Gerald make this stunt at the front-line sound like hell on earth!

During the stunt at Flers/Gueudecourt, Lieutenant Willie Goodwin again showed his true grit. An intriguing but limited footnote in Bean's 'Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918' reports the naming of:

- *Goodwin's Post, which was an advanced trench dug by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion on the night of November 4<sup>th</sup>, and afterwards abandoned. It was occupied and consolidated soon afterwards by Lt Goodwin.*

It appears Goodwin's Post was close to the section of trench called the 'Nasen Riegel' or 'Nose Switch'.<sup>5,6</sup>

Both Percy and Gerald commented on a football match where the officers played the sergeants from slightly different perspectives:

- *I played in a few football matches and played pretty well for about five minutes. We played the sergeants the other day and they beat us. [Gerald Evans, 11/10/16]<sup>4</sup>*

With apparent relish, Percy Lay commented in his diary:

- *6 October: "Officers played Sgts at football and we beat them by about 3 goals." [Percy Lay.]<sup>14</sup>*

It is not known if Willie also pulled on his boots for this match.

### **Wounded and recuperation back in England: mid-November 1916 to 1 July 1917**

The whole battalion had been knocked about by Pozieres and the cold, wet and muddy stunt at Flers and Gueudecourt. Not long after, Lieutenant Willie Goodwin presumably came down with a heavy cold which infected his left ear, producing a frightful earache. Ostensibly, his susceptibility to earache was likely exacerbated by the percussive concussion from the shell during the second Pozieres stunt that killed the wounded soldier Willie was tending and that knocked Willie out for 30 minutes. Willie reported in a letter to John Windmill, 2 April 1917:

- *After these minor wounds [bullet in leg Gallipoli, minor shrapnel wounds Pozieres, etc] things went very sweet until 13<sup>th</sup> November last, when I had an injury to the left ear, which necessitated coming to London [3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital] to undergo an operation, which I am pleased to say, has proved very successful.<sup>9</sup>*

The diagnosis recorded on Willie's service record was *Otitis Media Supp Mid Ear*. Otitis media is an infection of the middle ear, the area just behind the eardrum. It happens when the eustachian tubes, which connect the middle ear to the nose, get blocked with fluid. Mucus, pus, and bacteria can also pool behind the eardrum, causing pressure and pain. The condition is very painful and would have precluded Willie from being anywhere near exploding shells or being out in the cold and wet. These days, a short course of antibiotics and the condition would soon be healed. However, back then an operation was followed by several months of hospital visits for examinations, combined with 'Blighty' leave to alleviate the symptoms.

The extended leave Willie received because of his ear problem was both deserved and well used. Having only emigrated from England in 1913, 'home leave' once the operation was well settled was exactly that, and Willie's diary shows he made full use of it to catch up with friends and family at various Herefordshire 'watering holes'. His family, and most particularly his mother Caroline in Colwall, was within an easy day's train trip from London. On one trip to Colwall, despite the cold, he recorded in his diary:

- *Friday 26 January 1917: Got up at 10.00, borrowed ferrets off Jim Connop. Johnnie & myself went rabbiting on the race course, we got one rabbit, arrived home.<sup>23</sup>*

(I wonder if this tasted as good as Australian 'underground mutton'.)

The other substantive use of his time was one Miss Hilda Haywood. We are not sure when Willie and Hilda met (perhaps she was a nurse or associated with the hospital), but her earliest mention in his diary was on 21 January 1917 [only Willie's 1917 diary is accessible]. After this, Willie's diary shows that the couple clearly took every opportunity to spend time together, or if this was not possible, write or telegram each other.

The other frequent correspondent that Willie had was his mother [right, Caroline Goodwin, Willie Goodwin's mother, c1920].







One particular benefit of being in London and a certain highlight, was for Willie was to have his MC and Bar investiture at Buckingham Palace on Monday, 5 February 1917, by the King.<sup>23</sup> Willie does not say if anyone accompanied him to the investiture, but a very elegant picture taken the next day [left] suggests his guest may have been his favourite cousin, Edie (Edith).

**Left:** Willie and his cousin Edie. Photo taken the day after the presentation of his MC and Bar at Buckingham Place on 5/2/1917.

Willie's diary has many entries noting that the weather in January and February 1917 was 'very cold and slippery'.<sup>23</sup>

Willie was also fortunate to miss out on the costly attack of Second Bullecourt in May 1917. During the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion's residence of the front line at Bullecourt (7-10 May), they assaulted the Hindenburg Line and captured 200 yards of the German OG2 Trench, which they held despite three strong

German counter-attacks in what was later described as one of the most ferocious hand to hand bombing fights of the war.<sup>1,6,16,24</sup> This 200 yard stretch of trench ran from near the present-day 'Bullecourt Digger' Park (the furthest the Australians progressed in 1917), somewhere near where a wounded Sgt Percy Lay was fiercely holding the line for 'A' Company, to the other end of the trench to the south east, where Gerald Evans was similarly fighting desperately with 'D' Company. In this stunt both deservedly won their first decorations: a MM for Percy Lay and a MC for Gerald Evans. Not long after Gerald was promoted to captain (27/7/1917).

Despite his emotional attachment to Hilda, Willie was keen to see the war to its end, as he outlined in his letter to John Windmill on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1917:

- *Although this is a somewhat risky game, I wouldn't sell my position for £100 and a first-class ticket back to Australia, but at the same time I would like to see the war finish quickly, and then I should only be too pleased to travel back to Australia.*<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps his thinking was also somewhat akin to that expressed by Gerald Evans in a letter to his sister on 15 February 1917, after a six-week stint at an officer training camp at Chateau Fixacourt, between Amiens and Abbeville.

- *I will not be sorry to get back to the Battalion, as it becomes quite like home and one misses everything that is going on there. There are some grand fellows in my Battalion and it is almost worth going to war to know them.*<sup>4</sup>

The last time Willie and Hilda saw each other was on the train from London to Southampton, as recorded in Willie's diary on Wednesday, 5 September 1917.

- *Left Lugeshead on 12.20pm train, met Hilda at Andover Junction and travelled with her, arrived at Southampton at 2.30pm. Spent afternoon with Hilda and had dinner with her, leaving her at dock gate. Left Southampton at 19.55, washed, lay down but could not sleep.*<sup>23</sup>

### **Third Ypres: September to October 1917.**

After landing in Le Havre and attending an advanced bombing school, Willie made his way to Reningelst, Belgium (near Messines Ridge), to rejoin the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion. This would be the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion's first foray into what was officially and collectively called Third Ypres, but which is more infamously known as the Battles for Passchendaele or just 'Passchendaele'. Being in the area while preparing for the attack on 20 September [the Battle of Menin Road toward the edges of Polygon Wood via Clapham Junction], Willie either took the initiative or was ordered to survey the coming battlefield before the arrival of the battalion. His diary for the next few days provides an accurate first-hand account:<sup>23</sup>

- **Saturday 15 September 1917:** *Having a 'Capt Cook'. Got up then got on motor lorry to Hellfire Cr [east of Ypres, along Menin Road] then walked on to Shrapnel Corner via Zillebeke, then rode in a motor lorry back to Reningelst.*
- **Sunday 16 September 1917:** *Breakfast then look at battlefield model, aerial photos. Got a bike & rode around ASC dumps to find Dick, Hilda's brother [Richard Hayward]. Had a game of football.*

- **Wednesday 19 September 1917:** Took Coy guides up to Railway dugouts, then to Bund dugout at Zillebeke Lake, later move out to marshalling position for attack on 20th. Started raining about 9.30 pm so travelling was very slippery to guide the Bn up to Clapham Junction.

CEW Bean's notes state that as Willie had just returned to duty, the battalion was looking to ease him back into duty by assigning him less dangerous headquarter duties.<sup>5</sup> This obviously did not accord with Willie's nature, which was to be at the front line. In his diary, he records:

- **Thursday 20 September 1917:** Left Bund dugouts at 1.30 am and it was raining very hard. Slowed up by 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion and it was 5.15 am before first man crossed railway line. Heavy shelling at 5.40 am with a few casualties.<sup>23</sup>

Captain Gerald Evans [MC, MID, DOW 20/9/1917] was one of those casualties. He was leading 'D' Company though Clapham Junction when a German SOS barrage came down and he was hit by shrapnel. Shrapnel pellets pierced his abdomen and broke his femur. Gerald refused assistance and insisted that the company not delay the attack but move forward; he could be picked up later. It is likely they knew he was 'done for' as the bleeding would have been uncontrollable. He died sometime later at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on Menin Road.

- **Percy Lay** sadly noted in his diary for 20 September 1917: "*We have lost the best Captain in the AIF.*"<sup>14</sup>
- **Willie Goodwin** continues: *Got up with the front troops and single handedly captured several strong posts with machine guns. We captured 14 officers & numerous MGs. Caught a lot of Germans by surprise & reduced fighting. An allied SOS barrage diminished a counter-attack [but also hit some Australian troops on the left of the 8<sup>th</sup> Bn]. But the Hun did not make any attacks on our positions.*<sup>23</sup>

The unit war diary of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion provides a relatively straightforward account of the 19<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> September period.<sup>16</sup> It was particularly critical of an Allied artillery battery on the left, whose shells were continually falling short. Percy Lay in his diary had a more positive and complimentary account to Willie's diary of the action on the day.<sup>14</sup>

- *8<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to capture third and furtherest objective which we did very easily. Got about 25 MGs, a Brigadier and all his staff and hundreds of prisoners, not to mention those killed.*
- *We gained all we were asked to and a little more. It was amusing to see the way the chaps went into battle. It looked more like a race meeting than a battle. Consolidated positions for the counter-attacks that were sure to come and we caught him massing for the attack and cut him up before any of them reached our lines. Our casualties were very light for the day but our company lost most of our officers, **Capt Gerald Evans**, **Lts Alexander Fulton** [b1883, KIA 20/9/17], **James Wicks** [b1891, RTA] and **Reg Brinsmead** [MC, b1893, KIA 17/12/17], got wounded, leaving only one officer unwounded but Lt Brinsmead would not go away ... we lost a few slashing good NCO's, amongst the gamest and best was **Cpl Horace Hayes** [b1893, KIA 20/9/17] who died like a true Briton, also **Sgts John Brown** [b1894, KIA 20/9/17] and **Arnott**. At Dickebush were given a hot meal and the brigadiers came around, giving praise for the splendid work we did. This praise continued at Steenvoorde and at the Church parade.*

Sergeant Percy Lay received his DCM for this action, which was well deserved based on the descriptions of both Bean<sup>5,6</sup> and Austin.<sup>1</sup> On 29 September, Percy Lay was promoted to lieutenant and moved to 'D' Company.

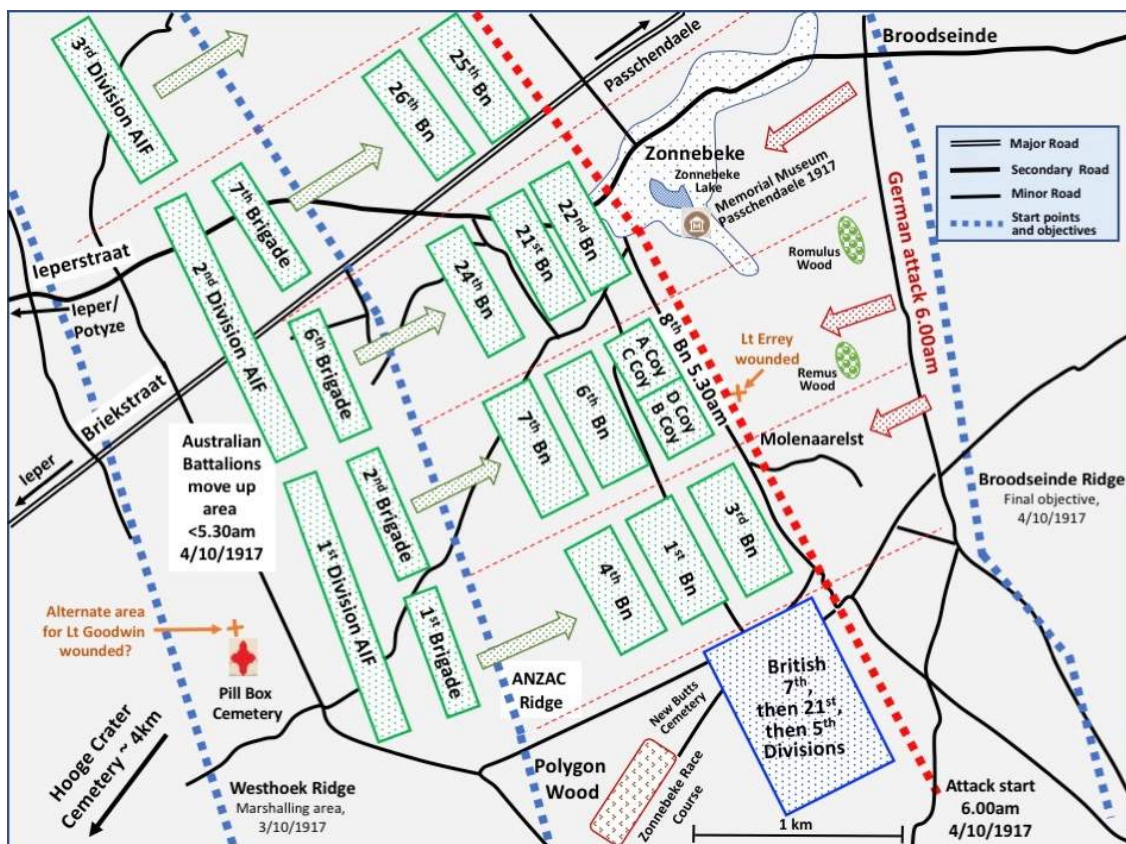
Lieut Willie Goodwin's last diary entries [no entries from 30 Sept thru to 4 Oct] are as follows:<sup>14</sup>

- **Friday 28 September 1917:** *Got up 7.30 had breakfast then wrote a letter to Hilda. I received a letter from mother. I reported at Brigade HQ as Adjutant for Bn. After dinner, Bn practiced blowing up on tape line. Retired at 10.10 pm. Weather very good.*
- **Saturday 29 September 1917:** *Got up at 02.30, 5 others off & myself reported to Bde HQ at 4.10 am & went in lorry to forward area. We got off bus but passed shell fire line about 6.00 am. We got to forward line about 7.30 am. We walked back to Ypres to have some cocoa. Then we got a lorry from Ypres to Poperinge, had lunch, we had another lunch with Major Goddard, we came back in his car. I had a sleep then had dinner, packed my things. I received a letter from mother. Heard planes come over about 8 pm.*

A combination of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion's diary and that of Percy Lay's tells the story of the attack on Broodseinde Ridge. A map of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion's approximate position and its objectives is given **below**.

- **3<sup>rd</sup> Oct:** *Marshall into position on ANZAC Ridge, Zonnebeke area, moving towards Broodseinde.*<sup>16</sup>

- **4 October 1917:** In form-up one officer killed (Lt Maguire) and 2 OR killed by shell fire. 'A' Coy on left and 'B' Coy on right ('C' and 'D' supporting respectively). The war diary notes with some pride that the pre-attack barrage was one of the severest tests of the operation ... But the troops stood their ground with great fortitude anxiously awaiting zero hour. Erratic but heavy shelling reported.<sup>16</sup>
- Fritz put down a heavy barrage (5.30 am) on us and we lost a good number of our men and we were all pleased when the moment came for us to go. We met Fritz coming over but we just pipped him by a few minutes and when he saw us coming he turned, then we had some fun. We got a large number of prisoners and close to 50 machine guns and also gained our objective, which was a lovely ridge commanding all the ground for miles around. About six of us had some fun, we got well out in front and first we got 35 prisoners out of three strongpoints, then we had a good chase after the HQ staff but they beat us but I got all their papers and sent them back and heard they were the most important papers ... [Percy Lay.]<sup>14</sup>
- We lost a good lot of officers and men, some of the best in the Division: **Capt's Rudolph Kirsch** [b1893, he & brother **Pte Vivian Kirsch**, 38<sup>th</sup> Bn, b1897, both KIA 4/10/17; neither brother has a known grave]; **John Davidson** [b1895, KIA 4/10/17]; **Lt John T. Maguire** [3945, MC, MID, b1886, KIA 4/10/17]; **Lt Len Errey** [DSO, MC, MID, b1892, KIA 4/10/17]; **Lt Willie Goodwin** [MC and Bar, MID, b1886, KIA 4/10/17]; **Lt's George Johansen** [b1888, KIA 4/10/17], **Harold Ross** [MM, b1889, KIA 4/10/17]; and **Ronald Glanville** [MC, MM, b1892, KIA 4/10/17]. 'A' Coy suffered the heaviest, we lost 5 officers, and six sergeants and another officer went to take charge and then he (Glanville) also got killed. Then I had to go and take charge (of 'A') and I managed to get through with them. [Percy Lay.]<sup>14</sup>
- **Lieut Donovan Joynt** reported in his book an interesting insight into this battle: My sergeant [Ira Gunn, DCM, b1893, KIA 16/4/18] was shouting something to me – the noise of battle was terrific. "What do you want, sergeant?" I yelled. He yelled back at me. "One minute of this is worth a lifetime of ordinary life, isn't it, sir!"<sup>21</sup>



Map of the Zonnebeke battlefield, with 8<sup>th</sup> Bn positions and objectives on 4 October 1917. Tracing of a map provided by Simon Augustin,<sup>25</sup> & assistance from Greg Stephens,<sup>26</sup> the 8<sup>th</sup> Bn Official War Diaries<sup>16</sup> & Bean.<sup>6</sup>

Percy Lay was awarded a Military Cross for his actions at Broodseinde, and both Bean<sup>5,6</sup> and Austin<sup>1</sup> attest that this recognition was well earned once again.





**2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Reg Brinsmead MC**  
8<sup>th</sup> Bn, b1893,  
KIA 17/12/17.



**Sgt Harold Ross MM,**  
8<sup>th</sup> Bn, b1889, KIA 4/10/17.  
AWM H05513.



**Lt Alexander Fulton, 8<sup>th</sup> Bn,**  
b1893, KIA 20/9/17.  
AWM DASEY137.1 c1915.



**Capt Rudolf Kirsch**  
b1893, KIA 4/10/17.  
AWM P11627.013.

Both Bean<sup>5,6</sup> and Austin<sup>1</sup> suggest that Willie Goodwin was hit by shrapnel at around the 6.00 am start of the attack. Bean's notes<sup>5</sup> record that although Willie was attached to Battalion HQ, after his foray to the front on 20 September towards Polygon Wood, he was permitted duties at the front line. It is very possible that he was with or near battalion intelligence officer, **Lieutenant Len Errey**, and was perhaps wounded by the same shell blast.

Alternatively, from Ron Austin<sup>1</sup> it appears that Willie was a relatively early arrival into the pill-box Regimental Aid Post, suggesting that he may have been in the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion start zone and was one of the first casualties from the German shelling that commenced at 5.30 am, and was then stretchered back to the pillboxes on Westhoek Ridge. Clearly, Willie was most likely wounded by shrapnel sometime between 5.30 and 6.00 am, and presumably close to the jumping-off line.



**Lt James Wicks, b1891**  
RTA Nov 1918,  
AWM P04023.001.



**Sgt Ira Gunn**  
DCM, 8<sup>th</sup> Bn,  
b1893, KIA 18/4/18.



**Lt Ron Glanville**  
MC, 8<sup>th</sup> Bn,  
b1892, KIA 4/10/17.



**Lt George Johansen**  
8<sup>th</sup> Bn, b1888,  
KIA 4/10/17.

However, this position may be confused with where he was carried to by the stretcher-bearers and died of his wounds. Unfortunately, there are no Red Cross statements to provide any details – such is the fog of war. What is certain is that both mortally wounded officers were moved behind the line, presumably to the pill-box area where the Regimental Aid Post dug-outs and the Regimental Medical Officer were stationed. Austin<sup>1</sup> described the scene:

- When Chaplain Booth arrived at the RAP [dug-out] to assist the RMO, the first man he saw was Orderly Room Sgt, “Poor old **Bill Scorer** [DCM, b1893, DOW 24/10/17]”. Lying next to Scorer was **Lt Frank Goodwin**, who was described by Booth as “one of the most courageous officers” of the 8<sup>th</sup> Bn. “Bill Scorer seemed cheerful enough but we hold little hope for him, while poor old Goodwin has no chance”. We looked over him, he was quite unconscious. Goodwin died that day, Scorer died two weeks later.

Austin<sup>1</sup> only mentions Willie (not Lieut Errey) at the RAP. Initially, when Reverend Booth arrived at the battalion in January 1917, he was viewed with some suspicion by the CO, Lieutenant Colonel Graham Coulter, and some of the men.<sup>1</sup> However, Coulter and the men of the battalion soon warmed to him, particularly

in Booth's efforts to care for the wounded and his courage in retrieving wounded men under fire when needed. It was for these selfless actions that he deservedly won a Military Cross during the heavy fighting around Lagnicourt and Queant in April 1917, with Booth ending up being one of the most admired men in the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion by the end of the war.



**Capt John Davidson**  
b1895, KIA 4/10/17  
8<sup>th</sup> Bn, AWM H05712.



**Lt Len Errey, DSO, MC,**  
MID 8<sup>th</sup> Bn,  
b1892, DOW 4/10/17.



**Sgt Bill Storer DCM,**  
b1893, DOW 24/10/17  
8<sup>th</sup> Bn, AWM P08891.001.



**Lt Ivor Murdoch MC&Bar**  
8<sup>th</sup> Bn, 1892-1964.

Lieutenant Francis William 'Willie' Goodwin MC and Bar, MID, died of wounds at the pill-boxes in front of Westhoek Ridge on 4 October, 1917, under the gentle care of Reverend Joseph Booth. He was buried in the battlefield cemetery established at this site. After the war, consolidation of the war cemeteries resulted in Willie being exhumed and reinterred in the Hooze Crater Cemetery, where he now rests in peace.

Willie Goodwin's loss on 4 October gained the attention of the Australian war correspondents, Charles Bean and **Keith Murdoch**, who lamented his loss: <sup>27,11</sup>

- **Murdoch 1918 obit:** *Goodwin belonged to that type of great soldier which is found in nearly every Australian unit – the man who does every soldiering job with all his heart, and becomes the idol in his regiment ... When a difficult advance was called for, Goodwin leapt from the trench but the men seemed confused and discouraged. Machine guns were sweeping the ground, heavy shells were pounding along the line. "Why do you cower?" shouted Goodwin, running along the parapet, and leaning forward to look his mates in the eyes, "Anyone would think you had something on your conscience and were afraid to die!"* [Presumably a story related to Murdoch by his brother, **Lieut Ivor Murdoch**, MC and Bar, 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 1892-1964].

On 20 October 1917, Percy Lay's diary recorded with a heavy heart:

- **Lt Clarence 'Tas' Mummery** [MC and Bar, KIA 20/10/1917], *one of the finest officers in the AIF got killed while in the forward area [carrying out reconnaissance]. His death cast a gloom over the whole Battalion.* <sup>16</sup>

In eight weeks of fighting during the Third Battle of Ypres, the Australian forces incurred 38 000 casualties, including 6 500 killed. <sup>17</sup> These are very sobering statistics indeed and the debate is still raging if this was Haig's folly or masterstroke.

Captain Percy Lay was seconded to 'Dunsterforce' in December 1917 and was relocated to Palestine and the Middle East. This unit was named after **General Lionel Dunsterville**, and drew on elite Australian, New Zealand, British and Canadian officers and NCOs. It would appear that this unit was a forerunner for the elite Commando or SAS regiments of the modern army.

Travelling from Zonnebeke and Broodseinde towards Ypres, the road goes towards the locality of Potyze, where there is a large French cemetery. Prominent at the entrance to the French Cimetière de Saint Charles de Potyze there is statue, a Breton pietà [next page]. It is a pitiful sight. Mary and Joseph attempt to take some of the weight of the dying Christ, while at the foot of the cross, women grieve over their soldier husbands, sons and brothers who were killed in action. For Willie, we feel for the grief of Hilda, his mother Caroline and his close-knit family in Colwall.



*Memorial to French Soldiers at St Charles de Potyze, Ieperstrat, Potijze, Belgium.*



*Heather Armstrong paying her respects at the grave of her great uncle, Lt FW Goodwin MC & Bar, Hooge Crater Cemetery, Plot XV.D.15, October 2016.*

Not quite a century after Willie's loss, Heather Armstrong and her husband Peter visited Flanders and paid their respects at Willie's grave [**above right**]. Another 'adopted Australian', Eric Bogle, who we are proud to call our own, wrote the song 'No Man's Land'<sup>28</sup> about another Willie, but it may as well have been 'our Willie'. A selection of the lyrics are:

*Did you leave a wife or a sweetheart behind?  
In some faithful heart is your memory enshrined? ...  
Or are you a stranger without even a name,  
Forever enshrined behind some glass pane,  
In an old photograph, torn and tattered and stained,  
And fading to yellow in a brown leather frame?*

[To hear the song, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsIP6Z-6NTE>]

We do not know what happened to Hilda Hayward, but hope that she recovered from Willie's loss and was fortunate to find another good man. We are indeed fortunate that Lieutenant Willie Goodwin and his brothers-in-arms wrote scores of letters home and some kept detailed diaries of their thoughts and observations of the momentous events in which they participated.

If they had not, and these records had not been carefully preserved by generations of their families, we would all be poorer as individuals, families and as a nation. The alternative result would have been like that as summarised in the dying soldier's lament from the film 'Blade Runner' (1982):

*I've seen things you people wouldn't believe ... All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain.*<sup>29</sup>

*Lest we forget.*



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- Capt Percy Lay: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/298299>
- Capt Gerald Evans: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/232126>
- Capt Austin Mahony: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/137604>
- Capt James Hurrey: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/148803>
- Capt Rev Joseph Booth: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/362877>
- Lt Donovan Joynt: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/173257>
- RSM George Harris: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/176940>
- Lt John Maguire: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/354384>
- Driver Josiah Windmill: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/65940>
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- Lt Tas Mummery: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/340287>
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Harold Ross: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/53350>
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- Capt Gus Lodge: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/329194>
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- Sgt Ira Gunn: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/282174>
- Pte David Etherton: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/140296>
- Pte Archibald Smith: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/104725>
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Alexander Fulton: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/187251>
- Lt James Wicks: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/182120>
- Cpl Horace Hayes: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/209444>
- Sgt John Brown: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/230747>
- Capt Rudolf Kirsch: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/271325>
- Capt John Davidson: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/366781>
- Lt George Johansen: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/354601>
- Sgt Bill Scorer: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/210048>
- Lt Roland Glanville: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/61014>
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Reg Brinsmead: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/350994>
- Lt Col Graham Coulter: <https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/people/176651>