

**St. Leonard's Churchyard,
Heston, Middlesex, England
War Grave**



Lest We Forget

World War 1



SECOND LIEUTENANT

W. F. SMITH

ROYAL FLYING CORPS

13TH MAY, 1917

William Frank SMITH

William Frank Smith was born at Lowestoft, Suffolk, England on 16th August, 1888 to parents Sidney & Sarah Isabella Smith (nee Ling). He was baptised on 20th September, 1888 at St. Margaret's Church, Lowestoft, Suffolk, England. Sidney Smith was listed on the Baptism Register as a Veterinary Surgeon.

The 1891 England Census recorded William F. Smith as a 2 year old, living with his family at 10 Mariners St., Lowestoft, Suffolk, England. His parents were listed as Sidney Smith (Veterinary Surgeon, aged 44, born Wrentham, Suffolk) & Sarah I. Smith (aged 31, born Swanton Morley, Norfolk). William was one of three sons listed on this Census (all born Lowestoft) – Sidney Smith (aged 4) then William & Frederick S. Smith (aged 4 months). Also listed was Ellen Faircloth (Domestic Servant, aged 15).

The 1901 England Census recorded Frank Smith as a 12 year old, living with his family at 37 High Street, Lowestoft, Suffolk, England. His parents were listed as Sidney Smith (Veterinary Surgeon, aged 50) & Isabella Smith (aged 39). Frank was one of three sons listed on this Census – Sidney Smith (aged 14) then Frank & Stanley Smith (aged 10). Also listed was Alice Smith (General Servant, aged 17).

[The 1911 England Census recorded the Smith family living at 37 High Street, Lowestoft, Suffolk, England, which was a 10 roomed dwelling. Listed in the household – Sidney Smith (Veterinary Surgeon, aged 62) & Sarah Isabella Smith (aged 48). Sidney & Sarah Smith had been married for 26 years & had 3 children (William Frank was not listed in the household for this Census) – Sidney Smith (Veterinary Surgeon, aged 24) & Frederick Stanley Smith (Marine Engineer's Apprentice, aged 20). Also listed was Elsie Elizabeth Davey (Domestic Servant, aged 23).]

Private William Frank Smith was a 27 year old, Estate Agent from "Walalia" Bondi Beach, New South Wales when he enlisted on 14th September, 1915 (date as per Embarkation Roll, however some copies of Attestation Papers have date as 31st August, 1915) at Warwick Farm Depot, Sydney, New South Wales with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His religion was Church of England & his next of kin was listed as his mother – Mrs Sydney Smith, 37 High Street, Lowestoft, England.

Private William Frank Smith was posted to 7th Reinforcements of 20th Battalion at Liverpool on 17th November, 1915.

Private William Frank Smith, Service number 3267, embarked from Sydney, New South Wales on HMAT *Suevic* (A29) on 20th December, 1915 with the 20th Infantry Battalion, 7th Reinforcements.

20th Battalion

The 20th Battalion was raised at Liverpool in New South Wales in March 1915 as part of the 5th Brigade. A sprinkling of the 20th's original recruits had already served with the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF) in the operations to capture German New Guinea in 1914.....

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private William Frank Smith was allotted to & proceeded to join 56th Battalion from Zeitoun (5th Training Battalion) on 16th February, 1916. He was taken on strength of 56th Battalion at Tel-el-Kebir on the same day. He was allotted the letter "A" after his Regimental Number - 3267A (this occurred due to duplication of Service numbers when being transferred).

Private William Frank Smith embarked from Alexandria on 19th June, 1916 on H. T. *Huntsend* to join B.E.F. (British Expeditionary Force). He disembarked at Marseilles, France on 29th June, 1916.

Private William Frank Smith was wounded in action on 20th July, 1916. He was admitted to No. 2 Australian Casualty Clearing Station in France on 20th July, 1916 with G.S.W. (gunshot wounds) to Face & Side. Private Smith was transferred to Ambulance Train & was admitted to 13th Stationary Hospital at Boulogne, France on 20th July, 1916 with G.S.W. (gunshot wound/s) to Face. He was transferred & admitted to No. 1 Convalescent Depot (Camp)

at Boulogne on 28th July, 1916. Private Smith was discharged as fit from Convalescent Depot to Base Details on 1st August, 1916.

56th Battalion

The 56th Battalion was raised in Egypt on 14 February 1916 as part of the "doubling" of the AIF. Half of its recruits were Gallipoli veterans from the 4th Battalion, and the other half, fresh reinforcements from Australia. Reflecting the composition of the 4th, the 56th was predominantly composed of men from New South Wales. The battalion became part of the 14th Brigade of the 5th Australian Division.

Arriving in France on 30 June 1916, the battalion entered the frontline trenches for the first time on 12 July and fought its first major battle at Fromelles a week later. The battle was a disaster, resulting in heavy casualties across the division. Despite these losses the 5th Division continued to man the front in the Fromelles sector for a further two months.....

(Extract of Battalion information from the Australian War Memorial)

From the 56th Battalion War Diary – the Battalion were located in Bac St. Maur Sector from 15th July, 1916 to 21st July, 1916. *"Total casualties of the B n., for the day consisted of – 12 killed – 77 wounded – 13 missing. During the night 20th/21st July, 1916, over 100 wounded men were brought in from "No Man's Land" and taken to the rear."*

(Information from War Diary from the Australian War Memorial)

Private William Frank Smith was appointed Acting Sergeant on 13th September, 1916 while posted at 5th D.B.D. (Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France. He reverted to Acting Corporal on 7th October, 1916 & then to Private from 2nd November, 1916. Private Smith was to be Acting Corporal (EDP – extra duty pay) from 13th November, 1916.

A letter was received by Base Records in October, 1916 from Mrs S. Ghrst (?), Chiswick, Five Dock, Sydney, NSW, which reads: *"Having seen a "F. W. Smith" (private) in a recent casualty list among the killed and as there are so many of the same name, I would be so much obliged if you could tell me whether his number was 3267 (C. Company, 56th Battalion). His mother resides in England. Thanking you for any information of 3267."*

Base Records replied to Mrs S. Ghrst on 9th October, 1916 advising *"... the only advice received here regarding this soldier is to the effect that he was admitted on 20/7/16 to the 13th Stationary Hospital, suffering from Gunshot wound face, mild....."* (Base Records included Lance Corporal W. F. Smith's postal address).

A Cablegram from Administrative Headquarters, London to Headquarters, 1st Anzac, France reads: *"Your T89 17th No 3267A Private W. F. SMITH, 56th Battalion reported these Headquarters 17th instant and has been instructed to report Royal Flying Corps Officers Cadet Battalion, DENHAM, to-day 18th instant."*

Acting Corporal William Frank Smith proceeded to England on 17th November, 1916 from 5th D.B.D. (Divisional Base Depot) & reverted to rank of Private. He had been selected for training for a Commission in the Royal Flying Corps.

Cadet/Private William Frank Smith was posted to Oxford (School of Military Aeronautics) from 26th January, 1917.

Private William Frank Smith was discharged from A.I.F. (Australian Imperial Force) in UK on 16th March, 1917 in consequence of being appointed a Commission in the Royal Flying Corps. (*London Gazette* 30014 of 10/4/1917. 1st Anzac T89 18/11/16).

On 17th March, 1917 William Frank Smith was appointed Second Lieutenant with Royal Flying Corps.

Royal Flying Corps (R.F.C.) / Royal Air Force (R.A.F.)

The Royal Flying Corps (R.F.C.) was the air arm of the British Army before and during the First World War, until it merged with the Royal Naval Air Service on 1 April 1918 to form the Royal Air Force (R.A.F.). During the early part of the war, the R.F.C. supported the British Army by artillery co-operation and photographic reconnaissance. This work gradually led R.F.C. pilots into aerial battles with German pilots and later in the war included the strafing of enemy infantry and emplacements, the bombing of German military airfields and later the strategic bombing of German industrial and transport facilities.

The R.F.C.'s motto was *Per ardua ad astra* ("Through adversity to the stars"). This remains the motto of the Royal Air Force (R.A.F.) and other Commonwealth air forces.

(Extract from Wikipedia)

Second Lieutenant William Frank Smith was posted to No.4 Reserve Squadron (Farnborough) from 21st March, 1917.

Administrative Headquarters, London, England wrote to 2nd Lieutenant W. F. Smith, 4th Reserve Squadron, R.F.C., Northolt on 28th April, 1917, "In connection with your discharged form the Australian Imperial Force the enclosed form of "Proceeding on Discharge" is forwarded to you for completion in places marked thereon. The date should be inserted, your signature witnessed and form returned to this Office without delay. On receipt of same duly signed and completed a parchment Certificate of Discharged will be forwarded to you."

168.

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

Certificate of Discharge of No. 3267a (Rank) Private.

(Name) William, Frank, SMITH.

(Regiment or Corps) 56th Infantry Battalion (late 20th Infantry Battalion)

born at or near the Town of Lowestoft

in the State or County of Suffolk.

Attested at Warwick Pm Depot. New South Wales on the 14th September 1915 for the Australian Imperial Force. Regiment or Corps at the age of 27 years.

He is discharged in consequence of being appointed to a commission as 2nd Lieut in the Royal Flying Corps with effect from 16th March 1917 (Authority London Gazette 30014 10.4.17 1st Anzac T 89 18.11.16. Services commenced 31.8.15.

Service towards completion of engagement	} 1 years 198 days	Medals	} _____
in A.I.F.		and	
Service ABRAM	} 1 years 198 days	Decorations	} _____

Signature of Officer Commanding Regiment or Corps. _____ S. Bruggs Lt. Col. Colonel. Commandant. Administrative Hdqrs, A.I.F.

Place London.

Date 17th May 1917

Discharge confirmed at London, England.

Signature _____ S. Bruggs Lt. Col. Colonel. Commandant. Administrative Hdqrs, A.I.F.

Date 17th May 1917

OFFICE COPY

This Certificate is issued without alteration or erasure of any kind and should it be lost or

Second Lieutenant William Frank Smith, R.F.C., signed for his Parchment Certificate of Discharge No. 168 on 4th May, 1917 with his date of discharged from the A.I.F. as 16th March, 1917. He listed his permanent address in England as 28 High St, Lowestoft.

Second Lieutenant William Frank Smith, 28 High Street, Lowestoft, gained his Royal Aero Club Aviator's Certificate on 10th May, 1917 at Military School, Ruislip on a Maurice Farman Biplane.

Second Lieutenant William Frank Smith was transferred to No. 19 Reserve Squadron (Hounslow) on 11th May, 1917.

Second Lieutenant William Frank Smith was piloting an Airco (DeHavilland) D.H.1 No. 4634 from R.F.C. Hounslow Heath when the plane side slipped and nose dived while on take-off.

Second Lieutenant William Frank Smith died on 13th May, 1917 at R.F.C. Hounslow Heath, Middlesex, England as a result of an aeroplane accident.

A Court of Inquiry was held : *"Apparent vertical nose dive. First solo flight. The machine was OK before flight. It was the conclusion of the Court of Inquiry that the accident was as a result of mismanagement of the machine on the part of the pilot. Pilot taxied machine across the aerodrome and rose normally. Flew straight and then banked sharply by 15 degrees to the left whilst climbing. Machine then side slipped and nose dived"*

A death for William F. Smith, aged 28, was registered in the June quarter, 1917 in the district of Brentford, Middlesex, England.

Second Lieutenant William Frank Smith was buried in St. Leonard's Churchyard, Heston, Middlesex, England – Plot number New Ext. 4AA. and now has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

The Military Aeronautics Directorate, Strand, England, wrote to Administrative Headquarters, London, England on 30th May, 1917: *"With reference to your letter No. 4 AR. 76781, dated 23rd instant, I regret, I am directed to inform you, that 2nd Lieutenant W. F. Smith, was killed in an aeroplane accident at Hounslow on the 13th instant. I am to say that the machine he was flying developed into a nose dive, from some cause unknown, and crashed."*

England & Wales National Probate Calendar:

Smith, William Frank of Bondi, New South Wales, Australia, died 13 May 1917 at Hounslow, Middlesex. Probate London 26 November to Sarah Isabella Smith, widow. Effects £463 7s. 9d.

The War Office, London, replied to Base Records on 6th April, 1922 with the following: *"With reference to your proforma dated the 8th October, 1921, on the subject of medals in the case of the late Second Lieutenant W. F. Smith, Royal Flying Corps, formerly No. 3267 Private, 56th Battalion, Australian Imperial Forces, I am directed to inform you that as this officer had no medal earning service in the Royal Flying Corps, he is eligible only for the award if the British War Medal by virtue of the fact that his pre-war domicile was Australia. I am to state therefore that it is presumed the Victory Medal, if the claim is approved, will be administered by your Department. I am to add that the person legally entitled to receive the late Officer's medals is his brother, Major F. S. Smith, residing at 28, High Street, Lowestoft, Suffolk, England."*

Second Lieutenant William Frank Smith was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. The Victory Medal was issued through A.I.F. Headquarters, London. The British War Medal was issued through the British War Office, England.

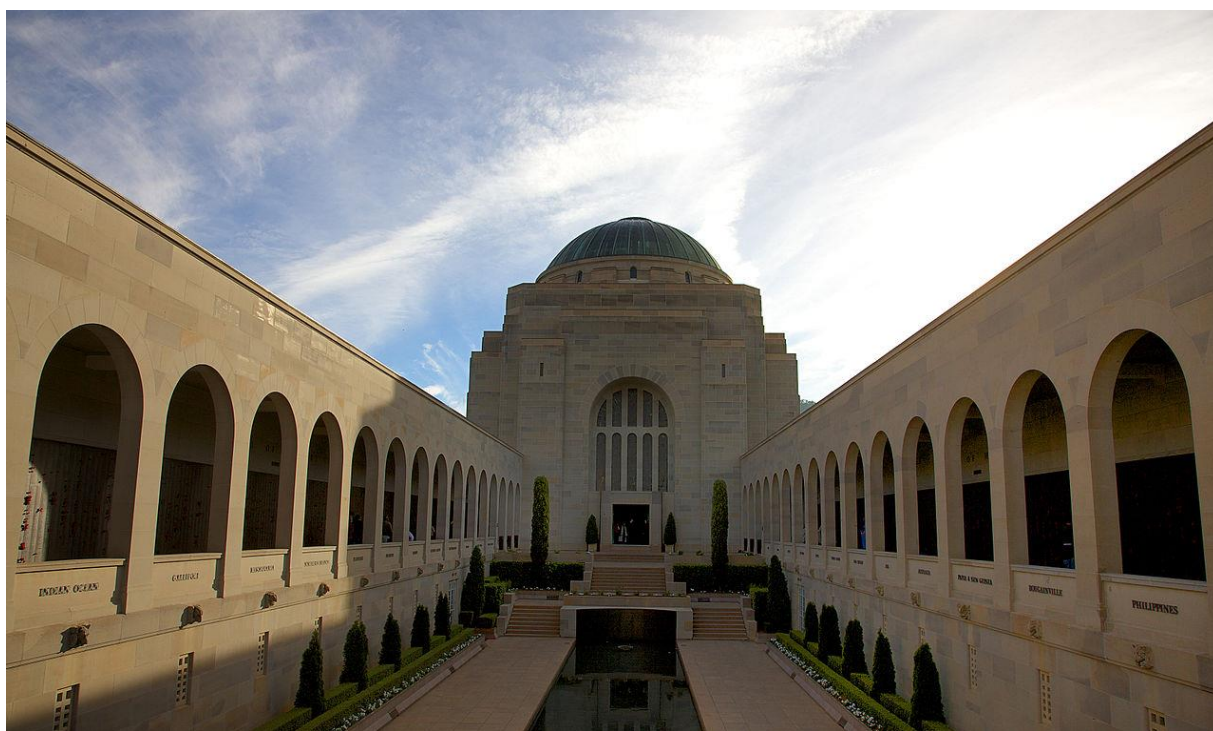
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Second Lieutenant W. E. Smith, of Royal Flying Corps. No family details are listed.

****(Note: CWGC were advised at the time of researching (September 2023) that the second initial "E" is incorrect on the CWGC website & also the CWGC headstone).*

Lieutenant William Frank Smith is remembered on the Commemorative Roll Book, located in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. The Commemorative Roll records the names of those Australians who died during or as a result of wars in which Australians served, but who were not serving in the Australian Armed Forces and therefore not eligible for inclusion on the Roll of Honour.



Commemorative Roll (Photo from AWM)



Commemorative Area of the Australian War Memorial (Capital Photographer)

A "F. Smith" is remembered on the St. Andrews Church Roll of Honour, located in Lowestoft War Memorial Museum, Whapload Road, Roman Hill, Lowestoft, Suffolk, England.



St. Andrews Church Roll of Honour (Photo from War Memorials Online – Helen Steed)

(45 pages of Private William Frank Smith's A.I.F. 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 Australia

Great Britain Royal Aero Club Aviators' Certificates:

4631

SMITH, William Frank
28, High Street, Lowestoft

Born 16th Aug. 1888 *at* Lowestoft

Nationality British

Rank, Regiment, Profession 2nd Lieut. R.F.C. (S.R.)

Certificate taken on Maurice Farman Biplane

At Military School, Ruislip

Date 10th May, 1917.



2nd Lieut.

William Frank Smith

R.F.C. (S.R.)

4631

10 May, 1917

Newspaper Notices

LATEST CASUALTY LIST

Big List of Wounded

The 193rd casualty list shows:

Wounded

W. F. Smith (England)

(The Tamworth Daily Observer, NSW – 15 August, 1916)

DEATH OF ANOTHER AVIATOR

A FATAL SIDE-SLIP

Another local aviation fatality has to be recorded to-day, the victim being Lt. Wm. Frank Smith, aged 28, of the Royal Flying Corps, whose mother resides at 28, High-street, Lowestoft. He was killed on Sunday through his aeroplane side-slipping to the ground after having mounted only 40ft. in the air.

Mr Reginald Kemp, J.P. (Coroner for West Middlesex), and a jury of which Mr J. A. Warren was foreman, inquired into the circumstances at the Churchroom, Montague-road, on Tuesday morning, when Station-Sergeant Goddard was present for the police and P.C. Butcher was coroner's officer.

Captain Arthur Leslie Chick, Essex Regiment, attached to the Royal Flying Corps, gave evidence of identification, stating that he had known deceased, who was transferred to the Corps from the Australian Imperial Forces, since the previous Friday. He had done six hours solo flying, and came to Hounslow from an elementary squadron for instruction on service machines. He was quite fit on Sunday. The Commanding Officer and a Sergeant had been instructing him. He asked if he might go up alone, and did so in a De Havilland fighter machine. It was usual for a man of his experience to be allowed to go up alone. Taxi-ing from the sheds to the far side of the Aerodrome, Lt. Smith opened out the engine, but from its sound it seemed that he did not open the throttle out fully.

The Coroner: Would you call that an error of judgement? – Witness: Yes. Captain Chick also agreed that such a thing might happen in the case of an experienced airman. He explained that flying he wore gloves extending over their sleeves, and possibly after opening the throttle the glove moved the mechanism as he drew his hand away. He got up a certain amount of flying speed, but pulled the machine off the ground before he really got sufficient. He evidently then realised his mistake and corrected himself by putting the nose of the machine down. He next banked sharply to the left at a height of 40ft. He was climbing at the time, and the result was that, not having a full engine, climbing and trying to turn at the same time, the machine side-slipped, nose-dived and crashed heavily to the ground. The officer was taken at once to the military hospital in the ambulance, but was dead on arrival.

Flight Sergeant Alfred Whitley stated that the machine was examined and found to be in perfect order before the flight. In his opinion Lt. Smith did not open the throttle out fully. He left the ground before he had gained flying speed, and by doing so "stalled" the machine, i.e., he tried to pull the body off the ground before lifting the tail. Then he got his left wing down, but rectified this and gradually started climbing. When he had attained a height of 40 to 50 feet he did a very sharp left bank, and through not having sufficient flying speed the machine side-slipped and nose-dived. Witness ran and shouted for the ambulance, which was on the way before the aeroplane touched the ground.

Captain Henton, R.A.M.C., said he saw Lt. Smith at the hospital door. He was dead, the cause being fracture of the skull.

The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death," and on their and his own behalf the Coroner expressed sympathy with the relatives of deceased and his brother officers.

The interment of Lt. Smith took place at Heston Churchyard on Wednesday afternoon with full military honours. Upwards of 200 of all ranks of the deceased's squadron attended, with the band of the East Surrey Depot from

Kingston, and the firing party was furnished by the Royal Fusiliers. Many handsome wreaths were sent, including a floral aeroplane from the flying squadron.

(The Middlesex Chronicle, England – 19 May, 1917)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for cemeteries and memorials in 23,000 locations, in 153 countries. In all 1.7 million men and women from the Commonwealth forces from WWI and WWII have been honoured and commemorated in perpetuity.

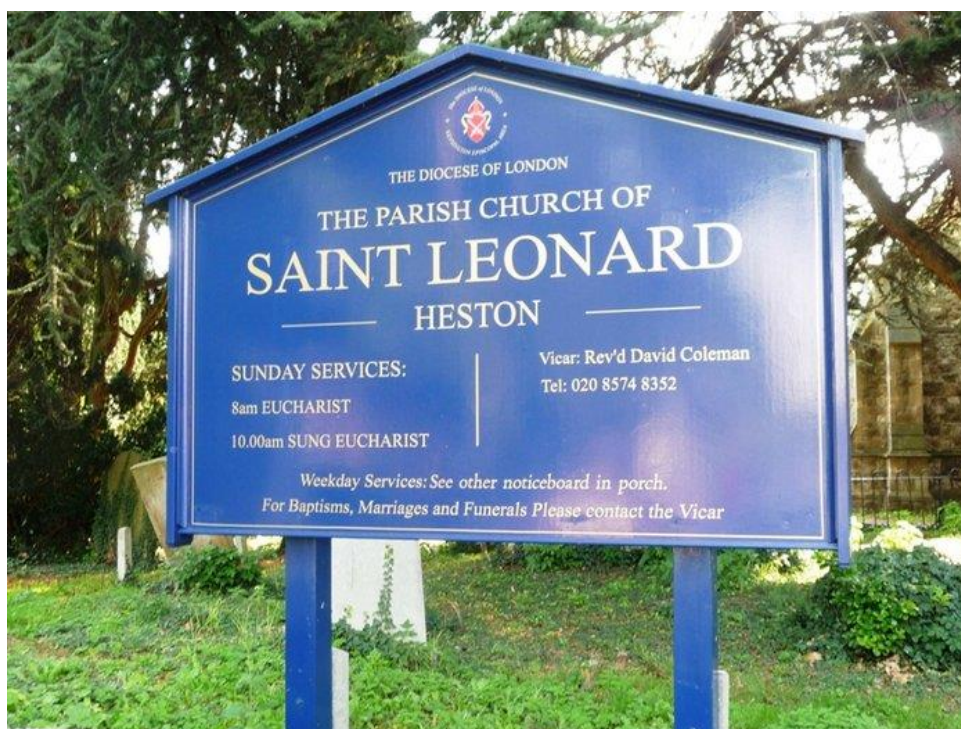
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, as part of its mandate, is responsible for commemorating all Commonwealth war dead individually and equally. To this end, the war dead are commemorated by name on a headstone, at an identified site of a burial, or on a memorial. War dead are commemorated uniformly and equally, irrespective of military or civil rank, race or creed.

Not all service personnel have a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. In some instances the relative chose to have their own memorial/headstone placed on the deceased's grave. These private headstones are not maintained by the CWGC as they have no jurisdiction to maintain them.

Second Lieutenant W. F. Smith has a CWGC Headstone.

St. Leonard's Churchyard, Heston, Middlesex, England

St. Leonard's Churchyard, Heston contains 119 Commonwealth War Graves – 62 relating to World War 1 & 57 relating to World War 2.



(Photo from Find a Grave – Daghli)



St. Leonard's Churchyard, Heston *(Photos by John Salmon)*





St. Leonard's Churchyard, Heston (*Photos from CWGC*)





Some War Graves in St. Leonard's Churchyard, Heston *(Photos from CWGC)*



Photo of Second Lieutenant W. F. Smith's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in St. Leonard's Churchyard, Heston, Middlesex, England

*** (Note: The CWGC headstone is incorrectly engraved as W. E. Smith – should be W. F. Smith – CWGC were advised September 2023 of the error.)*



(Photo from Find a Grave – Julia&keld 2013)